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# STUDIES ON MANY SUBJECTS

**Oxford**

**HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY**

*Studies*  
*on*  
*Many Subjects*

BY

SAMUEL HARVEY REYNOLDS, M.A.

LATE VICAR OF EAST HAM, ESSEX  
AND SOMETIME FELLOW AND TUTOR OF BRASENOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD

WITH A PREFACE BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

**London**

EDWARD ARNOLD

37 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

1898





## TO MY HUSBAND'S FRIENDS



It has been a labour of love with me to collect these papers ; but I am not sure that they would have been published but for the wishes expressed by my husband's brother and my husband's friends. My special thanks are due to Professor Saintsbury, Mr. W. Stebbing, and the Rev. C. H. Daniel for much kind help and advice.

I have also to thank the proprietors of the *Times* and of the *Westminster Review* for allowing me to republish the reviews which appeared in their pages, and Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. for leave to reprint the Preface to the School Edition of the *Iliad* in their Catena Classicorum Series.

My husband wrote some 2,000 leaders for the *Times* between 1873 and 1896. He was very proud of his connexion with the great journal. He was content to accept it loyally with all the conditions indicated in the following paragraph which I found among his papers:—‘A man must rise above even this form of selfishness if he would devote himself heartily to journalism. He must be content to be counted as nothing, in the future, as in the present,

to be unknown or set aside, and never to take rank among the real influences of his time. His labours will be rewarded, but not as men ordinarily count reward. He will have a real power—his work will be deep and lasting, but his name will be obscure or evanescent. He will affect the tone of the nation for which he writes, and will thus be the indirect cause of its most noble after-growth. The pillar will not be of his raising, and will certainly not bear his name inscribed upon it, but he will be the foundation of the whole, the first necessary condition of the state of public sentiment from which it has been raised in seeming independence. To those who are dissatisfied with such a position among the unrecognized forces of the world we will say only that they must try some other line, for they have not the temper of journalists.'

I do not know whether this passage is original or a quotation. I do know it exactly expresses my husband's feelings, and I think that his friends, who appreciated the individuality of his intellect, and loved the man, will see in it some reason for the satisfaction I feel in having been enabled to rescue a little of his anonymous work.

EDITH C. REYNOLDS.

ABINGDON,

*Feb. 7, 1898.*

## P R E F A C E

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I do not know that it is really necessary to add anything to the Introduction which Mrs. Reynolds has prefixed to her husband's Essays. But she has asked me to write something, and I am only too glad to be associated in any way, however small, with the present publication. I knew Mr. Reynolds for some thirty years, our acquaintance having begun in a place not invariably productive of friendship, that is to say, across the Examiners' table in Greats at Oxford. I think I may say that there was hardly more than one opinion among his friends as to the quality and force of his nature, and the misfortune of his giving such slight public manifestations of it in literary form. The salvage which fills the following pages will not give the mere reader anything like a full idea of the freshness, the vigour, and above all the geniality (in the foreign as well as in the English sense) of his mind, but it will give some idea of them.

That the appreciation may not lack due equipment, it may perhaps not be superfluous to point out certain things about these Essays, of which even a not careless reader may possibly fail to perceive the significance wholly, unless his attention be directed to them. It will be observed that with one, and that a most valuable, exception, the longer and more substantive Essays in the book

date from a period now more than thirty years back, while the larger number of the shorter and later ones are quite recent. We have hardly anything except the two Homeric papers and that on Dr. Abbott's *Bacon* for the twenty years or so of the author's middle age ; nothing except the admirable paper on Dr. Parr to represent, within fair room and verge and on a suitable subject, the 'calmed and calming *mens adepta*' of his later years.

In such a case there is a danger, if not a pair of dangers, which even vigilant and well-disposed criticism does not always escape. Many facts, new and interesting then, must rank with the death of Queen Anne now ; many questions then burning, now have the dryness as well as the coolness and quiet of ashes. Above all many critical opinions which it was then a mark of independence, of originality, at least of open-mindedness to hold, are now almost or quite commonplaces ; they have passed into that limbo of the obvious which does not contain the least valuable things of the world, but which is apt to be regarded with scorn by those who perhaps would not have had the brains or the courage to think the commonplaces for themselves, before they became commonplaces. Dante has never wanted English students, nor for a century at least English translators ; but it is not superfluous to remind the reader that the opening Essay of this book was written long before the flood of Studies in Dante and Dante handbooks and so forth which the last quarter of a century has seen. When 'The Critical Character' appeared, the *Essays on Criticism* did not exist as a book, some of its constituents had not made their appearance even in magazines, and Mr. Arnold's was no name either to conjure with or to attack except in Oxford and to a comparatively small literary audience. So too, Mr. Ruskin had not merely not entered his stage of being reviled or patronized or looked back upon—he was not even in

that of having any large or popular following; the very year since which, as he himself once significantly remarked, he had never changed an opinion, had not, I think, come.

Essays written in such circumstances by a man of excellent accomplishment, of a vigorous mind, and of that scholarly training which we have too often exchanged either for a loose expatiation over too wide fields of knowledge, or for an unliterary specialism, cannot but be valuable as what Mr. Arnold himself liked to call *points de repère*—stations of comparison, adjustment, critical and scientific recollection. They still belong to that middle third of the century from which we have too little critical work of real value, abundant as is the store of such from the first and last divisions. And unless I am very much misled, and that certainly not by invariable agreement with the opinions expressed in them, they are specimens of a value which is not common. To some, no doubt, they may bear marks of their time—the time immediately succeeding the first University Commission—which are not wholly congenial. I doubt from the tone of the Homer papers some years later, and from that of the Parr Essay very much later still, whether Mr. Reynolds himself quite maintained that undervaluing of a classical education which is evident in the ‘Hampden’ and ‘Public School Commission’ pieces, and which was a sort of Shibboleth with the University Liberals of his younger days. Yet these very Shibboleths give value to literature; they mark the time for us, they keep the past alive, they recall to those who have actually felt the old heats, and make perceptible even to generations much younger, the *vestigia flammae*. Nor is it a little piquant, for instance, as we read, side by side, the denunciations of a certain school included among the Public Schools, and the praises of another, not so included, to remember that the former Headmaster of

Manchester has long been, and is actually, the High Master of a regenerated St. Paul's.

The shorter Essays or reviews of the middle period have not this interest ; but they have others. They show, for instance, a very exceptional possession of a very valuable and not too common faculty, that of lucid and orderly presentation of complicated and not too manageable facts. The House of Commons would, I think, be fortunate if it always, or often, received ministerial statements digested like those in 'Ten years of Registration' and the 'Bimetallism' articles. I have no knowledge, and therefore no opinion, on the matter of the currency ; but speaking as an impartial critic of the mere statement as such, I do not think I have seen the matter put quite so forcibly on the other side. So, in the same way, though with not quite such an absolute impartiality of ignorance, I cannot say what 'Homerists' of different shades may think of the Homeric papers ; but I am sure that they are good literature, whether they suit my own ideas of Homer or not. Indeed it is fortunate that we have in this collection papers on all the three authors, Homer, Dante, and Bacon, who were, I think, Mr. Reynolds' favourites among the greater gods of literature.

As far as mere personal predilection goes I think there is hardly a thing in the volume that I would not sooner spare than *Smokiana*, which almost alone presents the lighter side of the author's humour and character. He was the only man I ever knew who could play whist holding his cards in both hands, and yet managing to sustain a long 'Broseley straw' in his mouth without breaking or dropping it : and the reference to these stately implements which the paper contains brings the accomplishment vividly before me. But though a kind of pathetic fallacy may thus invalidate my judgement, I think I can hardly be wrong in seeing a quaint humour little, if at all, inferior to

that of Sydney Smith's celebrated summary of the products of Ceylon, in this swift and orderly *précis* of a most important subject.

To speak more seriously before retiring from this brief ushership, I think that the last Essay—that on Parr—shows better than any, how real and great were the faculties of Essay-writing which Mr. Reynolds exercised so seldom on subjects and on scales worthy of him. That it entirely removes the unfavourable impression created in one of the very liveliest, artfullest, and perhaps best preserved examples of De Quincey's skill in desultory *érecintement* I do not for a moment contend. But this is just the beauty of it. Parr is as hopeless a case for panegyric as he is excellent for depreciation: and the only thing to be done with and for him is exactly what is done here. It is a craftsmanlike and critical 'placing'—not in the absurd sense in which that word is often misused on one side and abused on the other, as if it were a process of allotting marks and honours, but in the right sense of giving the relative 'value' of the man, setting him in due light and shadow, 'posing' him in fact (since 'placing' disturbs the obtuse) as a true artist poses his subject. It is of great interest to notice that this piece is the last in all senses, that it actually represents Mr. Reynolds' latest period of life and work. It shows, I think, when we compare it with its forerunners, not merely that there was no failure in his literary faculty, but, on the contrary, that it had distinctly improved and matured, and that with better chance we might have had a gallery of such sketches from him which would have been a distinctly capital thing.

As it is, we must be content with this collection of studies. It is to be hoped that many of its readers will know the author's admirable editions of Selden and of Bacon's *Essays*. I once urged him to follow up these with the much larger, the much needed, enterprise of a similar



edition of Burton's *Anatomy*—the book of all others which completes the mental picture of the seventeenth century in England, as contrast to the hard common sense of the author of the *Table Talk* and the gorgeous rhetoric of the author of the *Essays*. But Burton is as the 'Forbidden Country' of the old romance: no man has succeeded in editing him yet. The 'Selden' and the 'Bacon' Mr. Reynolds presented exactly as they ought to have been presented; and the presentation in these two cases should have prepared readers to appreciate what is now added.

GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

EDINBURGH,

*Feb. 16, 1898.*

## LIST OF DATES

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SAMUEL HARVEY REYNOLDS, born June 17, 1831.

Educated at Blundell's School, Tiverton, and St. Peter's College, Radley.

Scholarship Exeter College, Oxford, 1850.

First Class Moderations, 1852.

First Class Final Classical School, 1854.

Newdigate Prize Poem, 1853.

Fellow of Brasenose, 1855, and subsequently Tutor and Bursar.

English Prize Essay, 1856.

M.A. 1857.

Ordained Deacon, 1860; Priest, 1865.

Classical Examiner in Literae Humaniores, 1866-67-68.

Vicar of East Ham, Essex, 1871 to 1893.

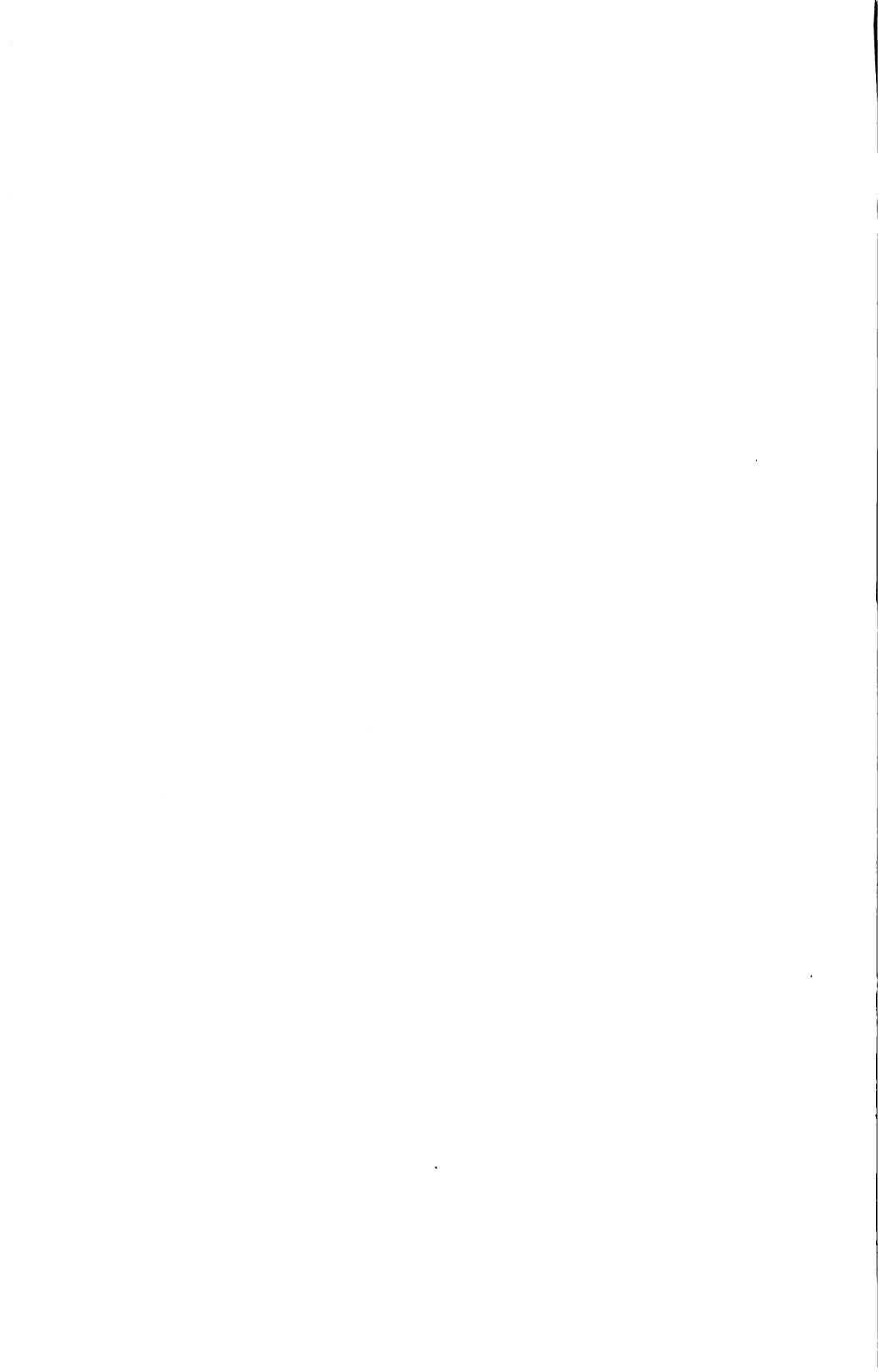
Author of 'The Rise of the Modern European System,' 1865.

Editor of a school edition of part of the *Iliad* in the Catena Classicorum Series, 1870.

Editor of Bacon's *Essays* (1890) and Selden's *Table Talk* (1892) for the Clarendon Press.

Writer for the *Times* from August, 1873, to December, 1896.

Died February 7, 1897.



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# STUDIES ON MANY SUBJECTS

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## I.

### DANTE AND HIS ENGLISH TRANSLATORS.

THERE are several points in which it has been usual to contrast classical and mediaeval poetry. They are often said to have adopted a different standard of excellence, and, necessarily, to have aimed at attaining it by very different methods. We are apt to think of classical verse as furnishing models, indeed, in which the most exquisite taste can find nothing to offend—as the perfection of refined and faultless beauty; but inferior to mediaeval poetry in spirit and vigour, as much as it stands superior to it in finished elegance.

We shall see, however, if we examine with care the best writers of each period, that this view is imperfect at least, though not wholly incorrect. There is no such marked distinction as it implies between ancient and modern literature. We may find, in each of them, writers of elegance with little vigour, and of vigour with little elegance. Petrarch must be conceded as a type of the former class; and Lucretius, with equal justice, of the latter. The notion has obtained credit, in great measure, from the readiness with which a few of the best known Augustan writers are admitted as complete specimens of

the literature before the Christian era; while the literature of the Middle Ages is even less generally known, and the early English songs and ballads, and the Latin hymns of the monks, are accepted as indicating, with sufficient accuracy, the nature and limits of the perfection which it attained and desired. The boldness, too, with which the technicalities of ancient art have been disregarded by modern poets has given some countenance to a theory which seemed to indicate, with such nicety, the distinction between those who never erred, and those to whose genius many errors could be forgiven. But to whatever extent the received opinion must be rejected or modified, it implies at least this amount of truth—that the excellences which it assigns to different periods are, in some degree, opposed to one another, and are rarely found combined in the same individual. Virgil and Horace, and, in later times, Petrarch and Sannazaro, have left us little to desire that classical elegance can supply. The writers of our own miracle-plays and early ballads have furnished us with sufficiently remarkable products of the vigour of an uncultivated genius; and it would be no very difficult task to place in the one or in the other list the greater number of ancient and of modern poets. But there have been few indeed, either in ancient or modern times, who have united in themselves the perfection of these opposite characteristics. Those only have done so, or rather some only of those, who stand among the very first of the world's poets; and first among these, by the testimony of his own and of every other land, must be ranked the name of Dante.

The *Divina Commedia*, like all poetry of the highest order, if it is to be properly appreciated at all, must be read in the language in which it was first written. The number of its translators, however, many of them good and careful scholars, is such as to allow the reader con-

siderable latitude of choice, and to enable him to form a notion of the poem more complete and accurate than would be possible from any single version ; and the more so, since they have written, as their introductions tell us, from a great variety of aims and motives, which we ought to bear in mind in endeavouring to estimate their success. The most legitimate of any, as well as the most attainable, appears to be the wish to supply a tolerable version for those only who are unable to read the original. There are very few translators of a foreign poet who can venture to express their intention of aiming at any higher standard. Such rare masterpieces as we find in some of Chaucer's *Tales*, or in Frere's *Aristophanes*, may, indeed, be read with pleasure by Greek or Italian scholars, but it does not often happen that a translation is worth reading by those to whom the original is accessible ; so that the office of the translator is in general a humble one, and he is obliged, by the nature of his work, to be contented with a very partial success, and to provoke a comparison in which he can show to no advantage. Surely, with greater justice than even lexicographers, may such men be termed 'the pioneers or slaves of literature,' condemned as they are to a drudgery in which few have ever succeeded at all, and which has for its object, if success be indeed attained, the spread of another's fame rather than of their own. Good poets are indeed rare enough, and are proverbially liable to pass unhonoured during their lifetime ; but still more rare, and more liable to neglect, are even pretty good translators. It is no wonder, that of the few men in each age who are really qualified to write in verse at all, it should seldom happen that any is willing to devote himself, on such hard terms, to a labour so unprofitable, and that the task of translating should in consequence be handed over mainly to those who are prepared to set about it mechanically, by a dili-



gent use of their dictionaries to teach them what they ought to say, and of their fingers to assure them that they have expressed it in the correct number of syllables. Such a standard may appear low, and unworthy of a *soi-disant* poet, but there are few whose verses, thus doubly fettered, can bear to be judged by a reference to any higher. We must take things therefore for what they are, and admire them as we can; it is of no use to complain that crows are not eagles, and that geese are not swans.

There is a story told of an old grammarian, at Alexandria, who inserted a pentameter between every two lines of the *Iliad*. The result was of course valueless, except so far as it gave proof of a certain mean kind of ingenuity which might have been much better employed. There are a good many verse translations of Dante, which it is scarcely possible to open without being reminded of the labours of the old grammarian. We ask naturally what is gained by the metre: why such platitudes of language should have been distorted from their native prose. Is Dante's genius so usual a gift that every versifier can soar with safety where Dante has been before him? Are great poems so common that it is a small offence to disgust men with the very greatest? or so rare that it is necessary to select the *Divina Commedia* for the travesty of incompetent translation? There is really less of excuse than of condemnation in the plea that they know not what they do; the traces of blundering unconscious ignorance raise less of pity than of disgust.

But it is no easy task that a translator sets himself, who ventures, whether in prose or verse, on rendering any of Dante's poems. We must be contented, in such a case, to judge by a very humble standard, and most gladly welcome mediocrity, where mediocrity alone is possible.

Dante was indeed a poet in whose verse we find com-

bined qualities the most varied and opposite. He is best known, perhaps, for the force and terseness of his language, for his power of short and exact description, and for the wonderful aptness and copiousness of his numerous similes. But it is more especially in the awful calmness of his most sublime passages that he stands without a rival, and far beyond all limits of praise. He had seen, as it were in a vision, the truth and reality of all that he relates ; the torments and miseries of the abode of lost spirits ; the lesser or rather the less enduring pains, which were to purge and purify, and not only to punish ; and, last of all, the blessed inhabitants of the heavenly city, the saints, and angels, and martyrs, who, each in their own station, and order of felicity, stood under or surrounded the throne of the Eternal King. All this he has described with no effort after originality, or labour of ingenious invention ; he has told us only, with quiet confidence, the things which he had himself witnessed ; but he had had more revealed to him than has been revealed to any other before or after ; and yet he stands alone and above the rest not more for the things which he saw, than for the tones of the language in which he uttered them. With all this are combined and blended the most exquisite beauty of thought and tenderness of passion. He could feel hate—few perhaps more strongly ; but the depths of his nature are most truly revealed in his powers of sympathy and love.

It is not easy, in criticizing a long poem, to illustrate our remarks by referring to detached passages. If the poem is a good one, the parts of it must derive much of their beauty from the relation in which they stand to the whole and to one another ; and, the better the work, the more certainly will this rule apply. In the *Divina Commedia*, or (as Mr. Cary prefers to call it) *The Vision*, so entirely does it hold true, that it is not possible to

appreciate fully any one division of it apart from the two others; much less can a judgement of each separate passage be formed without a sense of its connexion with all that goes before and follows it. It may be worth while, however, even at the risk of partial failure, to select some passages which would appear to suffer least by standing apart from the rest of the poem; and in this way to illustrate, at least better than by any merely general remarks, the force and variety of the poet's genius.

It has been observed by Mr. Gladstone, in his work on *Homer and the Homeric Age*, that Homer, Shakespeare, and Dante have succeeded, as none others have done, in expressing fully, by the flow and rhythm of their verse, the nature of the thoughts they intended to convey, and this without any straining after effect, or unnatural distortion of language, indeed without leaving a trace to show that the effect produced has been in any way the result of care and labour. No reader, ungifted with the ears of King Midas, can take up the *Divina Commedia* without perceiving how amply, as far as it relates to our present subject, the remark in question is borne out. We shall find, in the endeavour to illustrate it, that we are introduced to other beauties besides the one of which we are in search. A translation would here be of no service; the nature of the case compels us to quote from the original.

At the end of Piccarda's speech, in the third canto of the *Paradiso*, there is a very perfect instance of this adaptation of sound to sense.

Così parlammi; e poi cominciò Ave  
Maria cantando; e cantando vanio,  
Come per acqua cupa cosa grave.

'Thus spake she to me: and then began singing Ave Maria, and while singing vanished, as a heavy body vanishes in deep water.' It is to the second of these verses that we desire the reader's careful attention. He should observe

how exactly and beautifully the flow of the line accords with and bears out the meaning. The verse and Piccarda seem, as it were, to vanish together—the one to withdraw from the ear, just as we are to conceive the other withdrawing from the sight. This effect, if we analyze it, is produced by the weak sound of the open ‘i’ in *vanio*, and the pause on the first *cantando*, standing in immediate contrast with the absence of any pause on the second.

Again, in the seventh canto, the following lines describe the departure of Justinian and the accompanying spirits:—

Ed essa, e l' altre mossero a sua danza,  
E quasi velocissime faville  
Mi si velar di subita distanza.

‘And it and the others commenced their dance, and, like sparks of swiftest light, hid themselves from me by the distance which they immediately reached.’ The swiftness of the motion is well expressed by the rhythm of the last two verses; the want of any pause in the first part of the second verse compels us to read it rapidly; the marked caesura after the pause on the second syllable of *velar* forces upon our minds the width of the distance which the spirits had reached so suddenly. Again in the twenty-third canto, the song of the Angel Gabriel while he is crowning the Blessed Virgin is introduced by these exquisite lines:—

Qualunque melodia più dolce suona  
Quaggiù, ed a se più l'anima tira,  
Parrebbe nube, che squarciata tuona,  
Comparata al sonar di quella lira,  
Onde s' incoronava il bel zaffiro  
Del quale il ciel più chiaro s' inzaffira.

‘Whatever melody sounds most sweetly here below, and most draws the soul to it, would appear like a cloud which is rent and thunders, if it be compared with the tones of that harp with which the fair sapphire was crowned, whose presence sheds in heaven a greater brightness of sapphire

light.' We may here observe the sudden roughness of the third line, and the precise manner in which the sound of its last two words expresses the cloud rent asunder and the succeeding thunder-clap, and this none the less truly because the theory which it implies happens to be totally incorrect. Then follow the three lines, in all their sweetness and melody, in which Dante passes on to describe the music no longer of earth but of angels.

It would not be difficult to multiply instances to the same effect. They lie on almost every page, and peculiarly characterize the finer passages throughout the poem. We will add only one more before quitting this branch of our subject. In the twenty-seventh canto of the *Purgatorio* when Dante's guide, Virgil, has used the name of Beatrice to induce him to enter the gulf of fire which was to purify him from the stains of earthly love, and fit him for his lady's presence, its effect upon him, when almost lifeless with the terror of this new torment, is described as that of Thisbe's name upon the dying Pyramus:—

Come al nome di Tisbe aperse il ciglio  
 Piramo in su la morte e riguardolla,—  
 Così, &c.

'As at the name of Thisbe Pyramus unclosed his eye just before he died, and gazed upon her, so, &c.' In these verses the softness of the vowel sounds, the substitution of the trochee for the iambus, and the consequent absence of the regular marked pauses, followed by the pause upon the long full word at the end, express with wonderful delicacy the faint swoon in which Pyramus was lying, and the earnestness of his gaze when he opened his dying eyes and fixed them on Thisbe. It would not be easy to find a passage anywhere more exquisitely melodious, or one in which a succession and complex beauty of thoughts was rendered so accurately to the ear by language.

It is common to regard Dante as one of the sternest of

poets. He could be very stern ; he often was ; but these extracts may show that he could also be very tender. If further proof were needed, we might find it in the story of Francesca di Rimini<sup>1</sup> ; in the account of Beatrice's first appearance in the terrestrial paradise<sup>2</sup> ; or in the simile by which he describes her waiting and watching for the glory of Christ's triumph<sup>3</sup>. We may see, too, in these cantos, with what a simple, manly force he could describe intense passion ; not overmastered, and carried away, as it were, with what he relates, but standing above it all, not unmoved, but most strictly undisturbed. For vigour of poetic narrative we know nothing that surpasses the lines in which Justinian speaks of the conquests of the Roman eagle<sup>4</sup> : for grandeur and sublimity nothing like the coming of the mighty angel, the touch of whose wand threw open the gates of the infernal city<sup>5</sup>. We may feel, as we read the passage, how immense a loss we have sustained by the shipwreck of the sketches which Michael Angelo drew to illustrate the *Divina Commedia*.

It is a matter of curious inquiry how far Dante has been indebted, in the construction of his poem, to the labours of any of his predecessors. He himself professes the most unbounded obligations to Virgil, and states<sup>6</sup> expressly that Virgil was his master in poetry, and that from him his style had been imitated. 'These obligations' (Mr. Hallam observes) 'few of his readers will be willing to allow.' We find here and there a thought, or phrase, or simile which is derived without doubt from some passage in the Aeneid, but so altered and amplified that it can scarcely be said with any truth to have been copied. In Virgil's own style there is a graveness and often a sustained majesty which must have suited well with

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, v. 73 to the end.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxiii. 1-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* ix. 64-105.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* xxx. 28-48.

<sup>4</sup> *Par.* vi. 37-81.

<sup>6</sup> *Inf.* i. 85-87.

Dante's sober habits of thought and language ; the verses of both are exquisitely musical, but Dante's is the music of an instrument of wider range, and of greater and more varied powers of expression. We feel, with Mr. Hallam, how impossible it is to allow that Virgil was in any real sense Dante's master. The leading idea of the poem, the journey through the world of spirits, was no doubt derived in part from the descent of Aeneas in search of his father, in part from the ecstatic vision of St. Paul<sup>1</sup> ; but we shall adduce some reasons presently which may serve to show that when Dante addresses Virgil as the poet from whom his style is imitated, he is alluding not so much to the *Divina Commedia*, as to some of his earlier, and, particularly, his Latin, poems. It is obvious, too, to remark that, at the time when the words in question were used, the *Divina Commedia* had not yet been written—the vision which was the subject of it had not yet been witnessed.

An attempt has frequently been made to trace a resemblance between parts of the *Divina Commedia* and fragments, many of which are still extant, of monkish legends on the same subject. The vision<sup>2</sup> of the monk Alberico has been selected as the one to which it is most probable that Dante was indebted. Alberico was born at the beginning of the twelfth century. When he was nine years old, he was attacked by an apparently mortal illness, and lay, as it were, in a trance, without motion or sense, for nine whole days. But it was during these days that he saw a vision that was to influence his whole future life. It seemed to him that a dove bore him up, and that the Apostle Peter and two angels became his guides, and conducted him through the three abodes of the departed.

<sup>1</sup> That Dante had both these in his mind is clear from *Inf.* ii. 13–33.

<sup>2</sup> This vision is given at length in vol. v of Lombardi's edition, together with some interesting correspondence upon the question stated above.

When the vision left him, and his spirit returned to his body, he was for some time so bewildered that he could not (to use his very words) recognize his own mother. Shortly after his recovery he entered the monastery of Monte Casino, and led thenceforth a life of holiness and self-denial, such as (in his chronicler's words) would have proved, even had his tongue been silent, the reality of the things he had witnessed. The fame of this vision was soon spread about, and various accounts given of it, more or less false and incorrect. At length the abbot of the monastery desired Alberico himself to write down in full his own story. This was done, and it is a question in dispute whether or not the manuscript was seen and copied by Dante. The resemblance which several passages in the *Divina Commedia* bear to it are too close and too numerous to have been the result of mere accident. If Dante copied nothing from Alberico's vision, we can explain them only by supposing that both he and Alberico were alike indebted to the revelations of some earlier writer on the same subject.

The number of these had, beyond all doubt, been considerable. The vision of Alberico is a specimen of one only among many similar stories. There can be no question that the subject of the *Divina Commedia* had been frequently handled before Dante's time, and a great variety of legends written about it. It was a subject, too, which painters and sculptors had often chosen to illustrate, and which, in the representations of miracle-plays, must often have been brought before the spectators. Nothing indeed could have been better suited to the purpose of the ecclesiastics; nothing could have given a more truthful and vivid sense of the reality of the spiritual world:—

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,  
Quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus.



The accounts therefore brought back to earth by those who professed to have seen it, whether expressed in verse or legend, or sculpture or painting, would have been wisely encouraged, as likely to impress the people for their good, and give them a just sense of the importance of living for the life to come. And in this way there must have arisen, and in fact did arise, a vast mass of traditions, which no subsequent writer could altogether neglect; to which indeed, if he did not wish to outrage his readers, he must in great measure have conformed. Some, however, of Dante's commentators have resented, as an attack upon the poet's originality, what is in fact an account of the natural and necessary course he found himself compelled to follow. If Dryden had carried out his intention of writing the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, he must have proceeded in the same way, and have met with the same, not necessarily adverse, criticism. The *Mort d'Arthur* and the *Idylls of the King* are not less truly Tennyson's own, because their main plot, and many of their points of detail and incident, have been borrowed from previous sources. Originality is scarcely more shown in inventing, than in adapting the thoughts of others. When every allowance has been made that the most exacting critic could demand, when every borrowed thought or expression has been restored to its first owner, nothing will have been done to detract from Dante's praise as the most original of poets.

It is probable that Dante was much indebted, though in a different way, to Brunetto Latini and Guido Guinicelli. These writers were living at the same time with himself, his contemporaries, but considerably his elders. His debt to them would have been rather that they supplied examples and models of versification than actual matter or incident. Of Guido, in particular, he speaks in terms of the strongest

affection and respect; he calls<sup>1</sup> him his father, and the father of others, too, better than he was, who wrote the sweet verses of love. It was Guido, too, who introduced the custom of writing in verse, and in the modern dialect, upon subjects of philosophy and metaphysics. From his example, this manner of writing became fashionable, and he was imitated in it by Guido Cavalcanti among others, and by Dante himself. The reader of the *Paradiso* will wish heartily that the obligation had never been incurred; but we ought to remember how inevitable it was that the greatest men of those times should indulge in such speculations. The questions started had, to them, a real meaning, and an interest beyond all others. They conceived that in the endeavour to answer them, they had found the highest and most worthy employment of the human faculties. Theology and metaphysics combined to prove what is and what is not the cause of the dark spots on the moon's surface; reasons of a similar kind to show how it happens that a good father can beget a vicious son;—reasons why the Jews deserved punishment for putting Christ to death, since Christ's death was, owing to man's wickedness, in a certain manner just;—how it is that the divine nature can be immutable, and yet the origin of creation and change—when these and other questions of the sort are asked, and the subjects treated gravely, and with a length and fullness of detail which leaves no side of the difficulty unanswered, we feel an impatience and weariness which no reverence for Dante's name can quite overcome. These passages, however, which we read, only because to omit them would be to lose an essential feature of their age, were probably considered, at the time when they were written, as the most valuable of the whole poem. We ought not now to complain of their presence. If the habits of thought which produced them, absurd as they

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxvi. 97-99.

are, had not once existed, the rest of the *Divina Commedia* could never have been written<sup>1</sup>.

A great deal has been said about the meaning of the name 'Commedia,' which is of Dante's own bestowing<sup>2</sup>. We find among his *Opere Minori* a letter, dedicating the *Paradiso* to his patron and friend S. Can Grande della Scala, which, whether genuine or not, appears to contain the true explanation. A *commedia* is there stated to be a poem with a happy ending, just as the name tragedy was used for any story which commenced happily, and ended in misery and ruin. The dramatic form was equally unnecessary for either. The manner and language, too, suitable to a comedy, are there opposed to the loftiness of tragic diction; and whatever we may think of the grandeur of Dante's language, it is certain that he considered Italian, 'questa moderna favella<sup>3</sup>,' as he contemptuously calls it,

<sup>1</sup> There is an observation of M. Comte's, partly on this subject, which seems here to require notice. 'The characteristics of the age,' he says, 'appear in Dante's poem, especially in the critical tendency, guided by metaphysics highly unfavourable to the Catholic spirit. It is not only that the work contains severe attacks upon the popes and the clergy; its whole conception is in a manner sacrilegious, usurping, as it does, the power of apotheosis and damnation in a way which would have been out of the question during the full ascendancy of Catholicism two centuries earlier.' Now Alberico's vision, written just two centuries earlier, and others earlier still, appear to differ from Dante's in this point in degree rather than in kind. Alberico professes to have received just as precise information about the spiritual world, and the nature and extent of its rewards and punishments. He indicates a knowledge, too, about the destinies of individuals, although he is not permitted to reveal them. Again, metaphysics may be said with truth to be unfavourable to the Catholic spirit, and their existence may indicate a tendency which subsequently developed into opposition to it; but it must surely be allowed that in Dante himself they were strictly subordinate to Catholicism. They are employed to establish and defend the Church's dogmas, not to oppose them; though of course, in themselves, equally available for either side of that or of any other question.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* xvi. 128.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xvi. 33.

as far inferior to Latin. Virgil's *Aeneid* is called a tragedy<sup>1</sup>; Virgil's verses are 'gli alti versi'<sup>2</sup>, but Dante was compelled by custom to write in rhyme, and to use the lower language of his own age and country<sup>3</sup>. We may assume therefore, as we said above, that in spite of all that may be said truly of his intense reverence for Virgil, he could not in such a poem regard him as his guide and master. The style of it was not imitated from Virgil, but stands in marked opposition to Virgil's style, however contrary this may have been to its author's own wishes. For we may remember that Dante had intended at first to write his vision in Latin; but he was compelled, by the decreasing knowledge of that language among the people, and even among the educated, to abandon his original purpose, and condescend to use the vernacular. A few lines have been preserved of the commencement of the original poem:—

Ultima regna canam fluido contermina mundo,  
Spiritus quae lata patent, et praemia solvunt  
Pro meritis cuiusque suis data lege Tonantis.

We will leave it to the reader to determine how far the possession of a Tragedy such as this would have been an equivalent to the world for the loss of the *Divina Commedia*.

The age of Dante and the other *trecentisti* has been

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* xx. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Inf.* xxvi. 82, so, too, *Par.* xv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> The following incident will illustrate the feeling which induced Dante to wish to write in Latin, the necessity under which he found himself of writing in Italian, and the advantages of adopting a style which made the moderns his rivals, and not the ancients. Ariosto had applied to Cardinal Bembo for direction (or the Cardinal had offered it unasked) about the metre in which his poem was to be written. "Put your romance," was the Cardinal's grave advice, "into good Latin hexameters, and you will immortalize your name." "I have no wish," was Ariosto's reply, "to be a second-rate writer in Latin, while I may be one of the first in Italian."—Stebbing's *Lives of the Italian Poets*.

celebrated by later writers as *il secolo d' oro*—the golden age of the Italian language. It was not (says Salvini) so much for the merit of the authors who then lived, that this name was given it, as for the language itself in which men talked and wrote. The custom, however, as we have seen, of writing in Italian had only recently been adopted; it had long been a spoken language, but authors had not discontinued the customary use of Latin. The Sicilian poets appear to have been the first to use the popular dialect, and after them the Tuscans, and the greater number of the rest who were Dante's predecessors and contemporaries. The only praise which the Sicilians receive is for their boldness in having originated the new custom; what they wrote appears to have been of very little value; but of the writers on the mainland of Italy, and particularly of the Tuscan writers, we have received a considerable list of illustrious names, who had already formed a school of poetry before Dante's time.

But whatever later critics may think of the language of the fourteenth century, it is certain that no high opinion of it was entertained by those who used it. It was esteemed quite unworthy to be employed in the treatment of noble subjects, and was used only in condescension to the people's ignorance. There had been in fact a separation for a very long time past between the written and spoken language of Italy. The former, which was employed by men of learning, was, or at least aimed at being, pure classical Latin; the latter, the people's language, the *volgare linguaggio*, was at first a corrupt idiom, whose peculiarities were developed as men dropped gradually the inflected forms of the Latin nouns, and altered those of the verbs, introducing, too, new uses of the auxiliary verbs; as they changed the terminations of words, and in many instances the letters in the middle; and as they followed the manner of speech introduced from time to

time by the successive races who had invaded<sup>1</sup> and had ruled in Italy. While this change was in progress the separation between the written and spoken language became of course continually wider, until the latter at length took the place of the former altogether, and the language of Italy was recognized as *la lingua Toscana*—Italian and not Latin. But the old feeling was at work, then as now, which makes men think the present inferior to the past. The *trecentisti* spoke and wrote in Italian, but all their reverence was for Latin. We have seen above what Dante felt about this; and what he felt was pretty closely repeated by others, at least down to the time of Petrarch and Boccaccio, both of whom follow, but not without a certain tone of apology, the example their predecessors had set them.

It may be a question of some difficulty to determine whether or not the *Divina Commedia* should be called an epic poem. The name 'epic' is applied so loosely, and with so great a variety of meanings, that it appears impossible absolutely to exclude it here; but an epic, in its most ordinary sense, Dante's poem certainly is not. Viewed as such, it would seem destitute of all unity of action; its persons appear and disappear, and change in every canto; there is no continuity in the story, and, except the author himself, no hero. We ought to regard it rather as what Dante tells us it was—as the story of the course of meditation<sup>2</sup> which his thoughts followed

<sup>1</sup> A very curious instance of the formation of a new language has occurred in the present century. While the allied troops were in Paris, a dialect came into use, formed out of the various words and phrases which the soldiers of different nations used in their intercourse with one another. It perished, of course, when the occasion for its use came to an end; but if the occupation had been permanent, the dialect might have become so too. We find another instance of a similar kind in what is known as *Canton English*.

<sup>2</sup> *Purg.* v. 61–63. See, too, *Inf.* i., particularly the end of the canto.

in the search after repose and peace, and as the message which he believed<sup>1</sup> himself charged to deliver against the wickedness of the men and cities around him. He is guided in it first by human and then by Divine wisdom : first by Virgil and then by Beatrice. *Per aver pace* is the professed object of the journey which he supposes himself to undertake, and he finds peace at last, when his wanderings are concluded, and he is admitted to the Court of Heaven and to the sight of the Beatific Vision. It appears beyond doubt that the poem had been commenced before Dante's banishment from Florence, although much, even of the earliest parts, must have been added afterwards.

Looking down (says Boccaccio) from his high place as ruler of his city, and seeing the nature of man's life, the blind wanderings of the multitude, and the sudden and unforeseen accidents to which it is exposed, there came thus into his mind the conception of the *Divina Commedia*.

And from this point of view we may regard the poem as intended to present us with the truth of things instead of their appearances, stripping from them their false show, and the glitter of their fairy tinsel, and holding up to it, as it were, a mirror, which will reflect no disguises, and will display human life and actions, not as men see them, but as God and the holy angels.

There is no shuffling ; there the action lies  
In his true nature ; and we ourselves compelled,  
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
To give in evidence.

And thus it is not only the world beyond the grave which is disclosed to us ; we look too with additional knowledge upon the world around us, and see, in the light of the infinite future, the reality of things present.

The spirit of the work throughout is strictly Catholic ; the world, with Dante, had existed only that the Church

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xvii. 124-135.

of God might be founded, and that its centre might be in the Eternal City, and that its saints might pass from it to the glories of the Church triumphant. For this the creation of the universe had been accomplished, to this tended the entire course of the past, it was this alone which gave any meaning or reality to the shifting scenes of history.

Ecco le schiere  
Del trionfo di Cristo, e tutto il frutto  
Ricolto del girar di queste spere,

is the cry of the enraptured Beatrice. The heavens and earth exist, and the stars roll on their courses, only that Christ may triumph.

But Dante could distinguish the Papacy from the Pope, the Divine Church from her corrupt human governors. How great soever his reverence for the former, the latter he never spares, but regards their vices and weaknesses as magnified many times by the grandeur of the seat which they occupied thus unworthily<sup>2</sup>.

Dante (says Mr. Hallam) is among the very few who have created the national poetry of their country. Of all writers he is the most unquestionably original.

We have seen above with what limitation both these remarks must be received. He then continues, in one of those passages of wonderful eloquence which lie here and there upon his pages :—

His appearance made an epoch in the intellectual history of modern nations, and banished the discouraging suspicion, which long ages of lethargy tended to excite, that nature had exhausted her fertility in the great poets of Greece and Rome. It was as if, at some of the ancient games, a stranger had appeared upon the plain, and had thrown his quoit among the marks of former casts which tradition had ascribed to the demigods.

It may fairly excite our wonder that so much excellence

<sup>1</sup> *Par.* xxiii. 19-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Inferno*, *passim*, but particularly Canto xix.



should have been so suddenly attained, and that the progress of Italian poetry should not have been, as most progress is, slow and gradual. If we look however at the circumstances of his own age, and of that which preceded him, we may derive some considerations which will tend in some degree to lessen our surprise.

We must remember, in the first place, that Dante was not the earliest writer to whom we are indebted for the revival of literature in Europe. There had been, as we have seen, many among his own countrymen whose names are still honoured, but the lead had hitherto been taken by France and the French poets. The fame of their success stimulated others beyond the limits within which the French tongue was spoken, and that Dante was among those whom they influenced is certain, both from the terms<sup>1</sup> in which he speaks of Arnaldo or Arnault, and from his own declaration<sup>2</sup> that he desired to prove by his sonnets that the Italian was not inferior to the Provençal dialect. It was a circumstance in some respects very favourable to the growth of Italian art, that the chief examples it had before it were written in a kindred, but still a foreign, language. French and Latin authors could furnish models for Italians to imitate, but could never be their true rivals, for they could never furnish the Italian people with a native literature. The field was thus clear for all, and their paths, however closely parallel, need never lap over or intersect. In this matter a man's foes are those of his own household, a man's rivals are those who have written in the same language as himself.

We ought not, therefore, to consider that Dante was entirely at a disadvantage by living at so early a period.

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxvi. Strictly, it is Guinicelli who is here speaking, but the sentiment, put into his mouth, is evidently Dante's own.

<sup>2</sup> *Convito*.

An early poet will receive always a better encouragement than his successors. The field of labour is large enough indeed for all; those who complain that there is no subject left for poetry, prove only, what they wish to excuse, their own want of inventive power. But when much good poetry exists already, the avenues to public favour are, in a way, closed up; the taste of men is satisfied with what they possess. The aspirant for fame will meet therefore with very scant encouragement, and will win his laurels, if at all, against a host of competitors who have won theirs when there were fewer rivals to be dreaded, and when even a moderate degree of merit could ensure favour and success. The existence of a large body of good literature, however favourable it may be to the formation of correct taste, is an immense discouragement to every modern author. His power of writing well may be somewhat increased by it, but it diminishes very sensibly the stimulus he has to write at all. Clearly as he will perceive his own faults and shortcomings, he will find that others are still more aware of them than himself, and he will thus be likely to leave a task unattempted in which his first endeavours will so probably disappoint his hopes. His attention will thus be turned aside to another subject before his powers have had time and opportunity to develop, and he will produce nothing great, because at the time when he was incapable of great things he met with no encouragement.

It is a point too of no little consequence that the words which the early poet finds in use, have not yet lost the freshness of their first meaning; the images which express the sensations from which they are derived, have not been dulled by long use, and diverted gradually from their original force and import. Poetry, as far as it is concerned with description, deals with the outside of things, with the appearance which they present to us, not with

their truth and reality. And he is likely to succeed best in copying their appearances in words, who finds his tools, as it were, made ready to his hand ; and a vocabulary and habits of thought and expression, derived from the senses, existing already to supply the sensuous necessities of art. The forms of the world around us are best painted in phrases drawn directly from the observation of the things themselves, and unchanged by elaborate reasoning upon their nature and the laws of their action. The impressions of which the mind is sensible are described better by the poet who has only felt them, than by the analytical psychologist who can ticket them with names and reduce them under the fewest headings. And there is thus in poetry, no less than in painting, a kind of perspective to be observed, the laws of which depend upon very similar conditions. A flat coloured surface is all that the eye can perceive in vision, the rest is the product of touch, and reason, and experience. The first conditions therefore of the painter's success in colouring must be that he shall practically divest himself of the results of this experience, that he shall ignore the rules by which he has learned, as other men have, the real size and shape of bodies, and shall regard only the nature of the impression they make, not upon the mind, but upon the retina. Very similar to this is the perspective with which poetry is concerned. It describes very much by colour, for it is upon distinctions of colour that all knowledge of form is grounded ; and so, passing through the whole range of the senses and feelings, it will employ those terms of description which shall most realize the thing described, and remind the reader of the object by repeating to his mind the very process by which the object itself is known to him. The concrete, not the abstract, is that which poetry ever loves, and the concrete itself it loves best in its simplest and most original form. In the earlier ages, when men's

thoughts about science were those of children, their language would retain much which it has now lost of the power of its original significancy, and these conditions, the most adverse to the philosopher, would be, above all others, the most favourable to the poet.

Thus, when Dante says that at sunrise 'the fear was a little calmed which he had felt all night in the lake of his heart',<sup>1</sup> he is employing a literal metaphor (if we may be excused the apparent contradiction) to express the exact feeling which he had experienced. The words are poetry because they accurately reproduce the sensation, and describe the very thing which Dante felt; they do not reason about it, or investigate its formal cause.

Again, when he wishes to tell us how the bright image of his ancestor, Cacciaguida, glided down in form of a star to the foot of the cross in which he was stationed with countless other glorified spirits, he says that it was—

Quale per li seren tranquilli e puri  
Discorre ad ora ad or subito fuoco,  
Movendo gli occhi che stavan sicuri,  
E pare stella che tramuti loco,  
Se non che dalla parte, onde s'accende,  
Nulla sen perde ed esso dura poco<sup>2</sup>.

As oft along the still and pure serene,  
At nightfall, glides a sudden trail of fire,  
Attracting with involuntary heed  
The eye to follow it, erewhile at rest;  
And seems some star that shifted place in heaven,  
Only that, whence it kindles, none is lost,  
And it is soon extinct<sup>3</sup>.

Now it is just this kind of writing in which, as all experience shows us, an early poet is the most likely to succeed. There is an easy truthfulness about it which seldom characterizes a later and more thoughtful age. The image is represented to the mind just as it would

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* i. 19-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xv. 13-18.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Cary's translation.

really occur to the senses, and the impressions of the whole scene are reproduced with a power, which yet evinces no trace of effort, no wish to do more than barely to record with accuracy. It is to descriptive art just what a story in Herodotus is to narrative. Each might appear to have really nothing in it, and yet we feel that there is everything in that very nothingness. Each speaks to us of common things in the language of common life, but it binds the attention with a spell more potent than that of reason or analysis.

Again, when Dante had torn a twig off from a tree in the grove of the suicides, and the branch from which it was torn bled, and sent forth a voice through its bleeding wound, he says that the sound of it was as when one end of a green bough is burned, and, from the other end, wind comes hissing out through the dropping moisture<sup>1</sup>. Here we feel at once how exact a simile is presented to us, how well it assists the imagination to picture to itself the very thing which it is intended to illustrate. It enables us to realize the appearance of what Dante saw, and the very sound which he must have heard. It goes no further than this, if it did it would pass out of the domain of poetry.

These are some of the many instances of word-painting with which Dante's verses abound; they are reproductions of the precise manner in which a sensation had been felt, or a sight witnessed, and they derive their beauty and precision from laying hold, as they do, of the very points by which the mind or the senses received their impressions. They imply no subsequently acquired knowledge, but enable the reader, and indeed compel him, to place himself as nearly as possible in the position in which Dante was at the moment of which he speaks. The effect of such passages as these may be fairly said to resemble

<sup>1</sup> *Inf.* xiii. 40-43.

that of perspective in the delineation of form and colour. In each of them we find a successful endeavour to *re-present*, and the means employed in each are as nearly the same as the different method of the two arts will permit.

We will add one more instance, somewhat different from our former ones, but nearly to the same effect. When writers of the present age speak of the spirit of man as something dwelling in the body and capable of being separated from it and existing alone, they believe, no doubt, that what they say is true, but they are very far from distinctly realizing its truth. The influence of custom and speculation has engendered among us a more or less conscious materialism. We may use the words 'soul,' or 'spirit,' but we think of them only as functions of the living body; when we attempt to speak of them as anything else we are employing phrases at variance with our real habits of thought, and the manner of our language will continually reveal its insincerity. It was not so in Dante's age; men's earliest and most obvious notions were then accepted as unquestioned truth. We will not argue from the entire plan of his poem, which presupposes a world of spirits, distinct from the world of matter. We will examine rather a few incidental and, so to speak, unguarded expressions, in which his real conceptions will be sure to betray themselves. When Buonconte is describing the manner of his own death, he ends with 'Caddi e rimase la mia carne sola'<sup>1</sup>—I fell, and there remained my flesh alone; or, as Mr. Cary translates it, 'tenantless my flesh remained.' Very similar to this is the language which Cacciaguida uses. He says that he was, by the hands of the infidels, 'Disvillupato dal mondo fallace'<sup>2</sup>, disentangled from the treacherous world. So too Dante himself prays of Beatrice that his spirit may find favour with her when 'dal corpo si disnodi'<sup>3</sup>; literally,

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* v. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xv. 146.

<sup>3</sup> *Par.* xxxi. 90.

when it unknots or disentangles itself from the body. But perhaps the most remarkable passage of any is that in which he says, speaking of the general resurrection,—

Quale i beati al novissimo bando  
Surgeran presti, ognun di sua caverna,  
La rivestita carne alleviando<sup>1</sup>.

At the last audit, so  
The blest shall rise, from forth his cavern each,  
Uplifting lightly his new-vested flesh<sup>2</sup>.

Or, more literally, the flesh with which he is re-clothed. The body is as it were nothing: it is the soul within it which is the real person, the source of life and motion. And there is nothing figurative in this, no lurking suspicion in Dante's mind that the language he is using differs in any way from his real thought and meaning. But would it be possible to find, in modern literature, a parallel to its startling earnestness?

There is much, very much, in Dante's manner of thought and expression, which may remind us of the miracle-plays of our own country. We find in each the same vivid conception of the spiritual world, side by side with, yet distinct from, the world of matter; the same strange union of Scripture with Pagan and legendary stories, and of the names of real men and women with the fanciful titles and personages of the angelic hierarchy of the upper and lower world. Dante does not indeed confuse history and geography with the unconscious recklessness of those with whom we are now comparing him; but we find in both alike that the imagination is strong at the expense of the intellect, and that their respective provinces are still unsettled; in other words, that the distinction between fact and fiction is really almost unknown. Our early miracle-plays have not as yet received the study and attention they deserve. They are well

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xxx. 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Cary's translation.

worth reading for their own sake, but still more for the light which they may be made to throw on Dante. Inferior as they are to him in everything except the power of *ποίησις*, of making something out of nothing, of distinctly realizing the creations of their own fancy, or of the fancy of others, and describing them with a marvellous air of truth and reality, they yet possess, in that one quality, Dante's own most peculiar characteristic. That the loss of this power has been more than made up to us by the possession of the scientific truths which have robbed us of it, it would be absurd to attempt to deny; but it is surely worth while to pay some attention to the operation of a faculty which the world no longer now possesses.

That Dante was deficient in a sense of humour implies a charge that may be laid to so many great and honoured names, that we may well doubt whether it amounts to a charge at all; nay, we may even suspect that a strong sense of the humorous is scarcely compatible with the very highest moral qualities. How great a difference of thought and character its presence would have implied, we may best see by the contrast presented to us in Shakespeare's life and writings; we may compare instructively the evident sympathy which Shakespeare could feel, at least with one side of his nature, with the lovers of 'cakes and ale,' and of merriment quite beyond the bounds of reason, with Dante's unbending sternness in the presence of vice and folly.

We can all of us remember the way in which Shakespeare deals with Falstaff. He shows him to us with all his faults, an utterly debauched old fellow, boastful, lying, dishonest, sensual, and with all this he has clearly no little affection for him. He can throw himself fully into the character, and trace, with an evident satisfaction, the course of his villany when it succeeds, and the cleverness with which he out-lies or out-blusters what would be to



any other man the most entire failure. We learn to laugh at Sir John, but the laugh is more often with him; his vices amuse but never disgust us; and his very repentance, in all but one scene, is ridiculous.

Now with all this Dante could have had no sympathy whatever; he would have met it with the precise feelings of the most rigid Puritan. His stern moral judgement would only have condemned, not only Falstaff's vices, but even the very buffooneries which Shakespeare seems to plead in mitigation of them. There had lived a citizen of Florence, in some points very like Falstaff, but (as far as we know) without any of Falstaff's grosser vices. Dante tells us only that he was a glutton; we learn<sup>1</sup> the same from others, with the addition that he was a man of great eloquence and refinement of manner, very funny, and gifted with most charming powers of conversation. Here was just the man in whom Shakespeare would especially have delighted, but let us see what treatment he receives from Dante. We find him in the third circle of hell, lying for ever under a ceaseless storm of rain and snow, howling like a dog, flayed and torn continually by the teeth of the demon Cerberus. It will be worth our while to turn to the account which Dante gives of him and his fellow-sinners and fellow-sufferers:—

They all along the earth extended lay,  
 Save one, that sudden raised himself to sit,  
 Soon as that way he saw us pass. 'O thou!'  
 He cried, 'who through the infernal shades art led,  
 Own if again thou know'st me. Thou wast framed  
 Or ere my frame was broken.' I replied,  
 'The anguish thou endurest perchance so takes  
 Thy form from my remembrance that it seems  
 As if I saw thee never. But inform  
 Me who thou art, that in a place so sad  
 Art set, and in such torment, that although  
 Other be greater, none disgusteth more.'

<sup>1</sup> Boccacio, *Dec.* ix. 8. Landino.

He thus in answer to my words rejoin'd.  
 'Thy city, heaped with envy to the brim,  
 Aye, that the measure overflows its bounds,  
 Held me, in brighter days. Ye citizens  
 Were wont to name me Ciacco. For the sin  
 Of gluttony, damned vice, beneath this rain,  
 E'en as thou seest, I with fatigue am worn :  
 Nor I sole spirit in this woe : all these  
 Have by like crime incurr'd like punishment<sup>1</sup>'

Some questions are then asked and answered about the future fate of Florence, and the condition of some of Dante's friends.

This said, his fixèd eyes he turned askance,  
 A little eyed me, then bent down his head,  
 And 'midst his blind companions with it fell.  
 When thus my guide : 'No more his bed he leaves  
 Ere the last angel-trumpet blow. The Power,  
 Adverse to these, shall then in glory come ;  
 Each one forthwith to his sad tomb repair,  
 Resume his fleshly vesture and his form,  
 And hear the eternal doom re-echoing rend  
 The vault.'

Here is startling change enough from Shakespeare's easy tolerance. We may judge in some degree to what lower depth of hell Falstaff would have been consigned, from the measure of punishment which Dante deals out to Ciacco.

It would be difficult to find two very great men who should differ more entirely than Dante and Shakespeare differed in their lives, and characters, and writings. There was the grave Florentine, once the first citizen of a free republic, and then an exile ; hating dependence, and yet compelled to eat another's bread<sup>2</sup>, however bitter—to climb another's stairs, however wearisome the road. His enemies were triumphant, his country would not receive him, and his lady had long been dead. To read, and think, and write, are poor consolations, when they are all

<sup>1</sup> Cary's *Dante*, Canto vi. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Par.* xvii. 58-60.

a man has to console him ; when he is shut out from all associations that are dear to him, when he has nothing left to hope for, and no object on earth to love. And this was Dante's portion ; and he has left the *Divina Commedia* as the record of his sorrows, and of their cure—of all that he had lost, and all he had to suffer, and of the strong undying faith that bore him through all, and above all, and gave him rest and peace in his solitude, and made him, in his exile, a citizen of the city of God.

We find in Shakespeare's writings the impress of a different and, we must add, a lower character. His powers of sympathy had indeed a wider range than Dante's, but chiefly because he could sympathize with much which Dante would have condemned and scorned. Instead of Dante's calm self-respect we find in Shakespeare an almost feminine easiness of temper, which shrank alike from asserting its own claims and from condemning others ; instead of Dante's sternness of self-control, we find the passionate struggles of a weak, erring spirit, and the vain utterances of a repentance, deep indeed, but consciously irresolute. It might seem, in truth, as if the wider range of sympathy, the creative power of mind that can identify itself with all it sees, and think the true thoughts, and speak the language of others, could hardly coexist with the grand repose of self-contained and self-reliant courage. It is essential for success in dramatic writing that the author's own personality shall never be intruded, that he shall forget himself and live only in his characters. Right and wrong, just and unjust, are no concern of his ; he reflects, but he does not discriminate ; he relates and describes, but he passes no sentence.

Very different from this was Dante's manner of portraying the men around him : he has stamped his own judgement on all he has told us. His relation of another world is, in fact, his sentence upon the present. A Catholic

of the Catholics, he has never allowed his own sympathies to interfere with the Church's teaching. He has disregarded alike the tenderness of private friendship, and the love he bore to the grand old heathen world that had never known Christ. He could feel the deepest pity for many whom he saw condemned. He could feel that there was much in them that was worthy of love and honour. But the unbaptized, and the unrepentant, he saw only in the Inferno; he dared not assign the blessedness of Heaven to those to whom the Church told him it was denied.

The world on which Shakespeare looked was chequered, as Dante's was, with men's vices and errors. He has seen all, he has described all, but he has condemned nothing. We may discover indeed in his historical plays a genuine warmth of patriotism; but from his other dramas we learn nothing of himself, beyond what his very omissions teach us. The persons he brings before us are real human beings, human alike in their faults and excellences. We do not look *on* them, we rather live *in* them, as far as we understand his dramas. It is not so much that we see the working of their minds laid bare, the inner mechanism revealed and plain before us, as that we are compelled for the time to live their life, to think as they would have thought, to speak as they would have spoken. If we cannot feel this, Shakespeare is a closed book to us; and as far as we cannot feel it, we may be sure that we have never really understood him. But when Dante describes, we stand by and look on; we are spectators, but no longer actors. Scene after scene, and person after person, rise up and live before us, men's thoughts are disclosed to us, their words are repeated, their actions and motives are interpreted. But we never forget ourselves in reading the *Divina Commedia*, as Dante never forgot himself in writing it. In

a word, we should say, if we might venture the comparison, that Shakespeare's mind is like the God of the Pantheists, the soul of the universe, living in and animating alike all forms of being. But if this be so, then Dante's is like the God of the Christian, creator of the world, and yet distinct from it; with whom nothing unjust or unholy can find any favour, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

That Dante has exercised but little influence in England, that few writers have been affected by him, and that comparatively few readers have cared to study him, is a fact for which several causes may be assigned, in partial excuse of a neglect so little creditable to our taste or judgement. It would be most erroneous to suppose that we have always neglected or undervalued Italian poetry; but it is certainly true that, during the period when it was most popular with us, Dante was not our favourite Italian poet. Little cared for at the time in his own country, he was not likely to be selected for especial attention by foreigners who were seeking instruction and guidance from Italy. So that the blame of our neglect falls with most justice on Dante's own countrymen; it would be hard to insist that our unguided instincts should have chosen correctly in the face of others' judgement; or that Petrarch and Tasso, who were read by Italians, and whose beauties we could perceive and enjoy, should have been laid aside for one for whom Italians cared nothing; and whose writings, however well they may repay study, certainly require it. For there is in truth much in the very nature of Dante's poem which would seem likely enough to prevent it from becoming popular anywhere. Among his own countrymen he has formed no school, and found no imitators. Many have looked on and wondered, but none have been daring enough to attempt to follow in his steps. This circumstance by itself, though

it justly adds to his reputation, would be likely in a very considerable degree to lessen his popularity. We ought to remember again, that the *Divina Commedia* is a long coherent poem, which has a unity of its own, as truly as a living individual body, and can as little bear to be dismembered. To read it in parts is, therefore, not to read it at all ; it is to lose, in fact, its whole meaning and spirit ; while to read and study it as a whole is a work of no small time and labour. Very few readers are likely to take up as a serious occupation the study of a poem which demands little less than the love and labour of a life. Petrarch and Ariosto may be read in detail, and the parts read will lose little by being separated from what surrounds them ; and the same is true, though in a less degree, of Tasso. But with Dante we must read the whole, or the parts will be of little value. There have been and doubtless will be some who are willing to undergo the toil of such a study, and who are competent to enjoy the reward it offers them ; but their veneration and love are not what is ordinarily meant by popularity.

We must remember, too, that the Catholic spirit in which Dante wrote forms a stumbling-block to Englishmen, which it is not easy for them to surmount. Even where this may have given them no actual offence, it has certainly been a reason why they have failed to appreciate and enjoy his meaning. A nation, whose brightest history has been hitherto the record of the struggle against Rome and her adherents ; which has acted in her foreign relations with something of a moral purpose just as far as she has sought to free herself and others from that intolerable bondage, may be excused if she is unable to comprehend the former beauty of that to which she now excusably stands opposed ; or if she is unwilling to surrender her fancy to an impossible dream of a Church perfect in the future, which has written its character in letters of fire on

her own past history : to a dream from which the noblest thought of Europe has long ago awoke.

It is possible, of course, to live in the present and for the future, and yet to do full justice to the lifeless notions of the past ; but it is hardly possible for very sincere Protestants. Those who believe in individual development and in the right of private judgement are scarcely likely to appreciate, as it deserves, the magnificence of a system which rejected both alike when set in the scales against its own growth and influence. It is hardly possible that those can ever be in a position to enjoy Dante, who blaspheme not only against the forms but against the ideas which it was his nature to set up for worship.

It is true that of late years there has been a change in many degrees for the better. Whether our religious zeal has somewhat abated, or our taste improved, it may not be very easy to determine ; but Dante is certainly more studied now than he has been for very long. Translations, particularly of the *Inferno*, are numerous and widely circulated ; criticisms, some of them of a very high order, have occasionally appeared ; and allusions to his writings may be detected not unfrequently in portions of our floating literature. But the change, whatever its cause may be, has been quite recent ; it would hardly be untrue to say, that there is more of Dante's influence traceable in Chaucer's poems—more genuine evidence that Dante had been read and loved—than in the whole body of English literature (Milton's writings alone excepted) from Chaucer's time to our own.

If the hatred of Catholicism has been a cause (and we feel sure it has been a principal cause) why Dante has been so little read in England, we must allow that one of his translators has done good service by a bold endeavour to divert its virulence. Finding that Englishmen will not read Dante because he is so strictly and entirely a Catholic,

this gentleman offers the suggestion that the notion has all along been erroneous, and that Dante, though born too soon in time, was really a Protestant, just as the old Patriarchs are said to have been really Christians. It is difficult to characterize severely enough the amount of misapprehension which this view exhibits. Enough has perhaps been said already about the extent and nature of Dante's religious faith, about his veneration, local and traditional, for Rome, about his essential notion of the Church both militant and triumphant as one and indivisible, and about his strict and stern regard for the most external ordinances of Christianity, to prove that a writer who calls him even by anticipation a Protestant has failed totally to penetrate his meaning and spirit. It would be impossible, we believe, to exaggerate what would have been his hatred of the essentials of Protestantism, and of the peculiar characteristics of its author. Mahomet, as a schismatic, was seen in the *Inferno* split down the middle from the head to the groin, with his wounds, as they closed up, continually renewed: Farinata, as a believer in false doctrine, was laid for ever in a tomb of fire. Vanni Fucci of Pistoia, for blaspheming God, was plagued by serpents and hunted by the Centaur Cacus: Brutus and Cassius, as disturbers of the course of Rome's supremacy, were torn and flayed in the very mouths of Lucifer. We must leave it to the reader to imagine what combination and increase of these torments would have been devised as sufficient for Martin Luther.

A *subjective* poet (we use with some reluctance a word which has done such good service in metaphysics) is usually understood to mean one who displays in his poems his own character and his own belief and sentiments. The *objective* poet, on the contrary, tells us only of the world without him, while of the writer himself we learn nothing. If this division is adopted, Dante must be placed in the



former class; a class generally assumed inferior to the latter, particularly in breadth of thought and universality of vision. We are by no means inclined to acquiesce in so sweeping a judgement; of course, if a poet's own nature is worthless, and his views of no value either moral or scientific, the less we see of either of them the better. The modern spasmodic writers, for example, who tell us chiefly that they know of no laws to which they are or wish to be subject, and that they are unable to control their passions, would do well to find some more valuable topics before they think it worth while to communicate their sentiments in verse. Impatient ignorance, and folly self-deified, are not attributes which we either respect or need ever wish to contemplate. But when a man is wholly given up to the veneration of something beyond himself; when he is subdued into obedience to a system or institution which has power to guide and regulate his intellect, and can command his entire love and reverence, all that he writes, as well as all that he thinks or does, must necessarily bear the mark of its influence. His whole powers will lend themselves only to its expression; and he will represent the world around him as he sees it, not through the changeful and fantastic medium of his own wilful fancy, but as he has been taught to regard it by a force greater than himself, by an object of worship to which he has surrendered his whole faculties. And such an object Dante found in the Church Catholic; an object in which men's faith and love through centuries of European history had found a resting-place; which had solved for them the hard questions of life to which they knew no other key; and had left for them no void unfilled, no conscious want unsatisfied. The system and its followers have indeed no abiding-place among ourselves; we have a right now to treat it as a creation of the past, which has vanished, as other creeds have, with the occasions and circumstances

that gave it birth, except indeed as far as it still exerts an influence which has become confessedly provisional ; we have other wants, which it cannot satisfy, other difficulties, to which it can furnish no solution. But we do wrong if we judge in any way of its past might from the spectacle of its present weakness. It was once a necessity that the greatest men's highest thoughts and aims should receive their direction only by submitting to its guidance. Dante, therefore, was a subjective poet ; not, as men are now, by the tyranny of an undisciplined will, but by an absolute submission to that which he recognized as greater than himself, and by the perfect liberty of obedience and love.

## II.

### THE FATHERS OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>.

THAT the study of Metaphysics has of late years been falling more and more into discredit is a matter of very common and very obvious remark. It may be our fault as a nation that we are a little too practical—a little too ready to insist upon immediate results—a little too impatient of abstract speculations, that are to bear no fruit until the fullness of time has come, and that promise little or no advantage to the generation with which they originate. We can afford on all these points to allow that we are apt sometimes to be betrayed into an injustice which our descendants may have reason to be sorry for ; we may cry *peccavimus*, and at least acknowledge our faults, even if we have little intention of correcting them ; but we need not, for all that, abandon, even in theory, the general position we have assumed. We may regret, if we please, that we are too often materialists ; we have little reason to regret that we are very indifferent metaphysicians.

The system of Metaphysics (if, indeed, that can be called a system which assumes a new form in the conception of each one of its professors) has now been on its trial for above two thousand years. The phenomena of consciousness have been subjected to the most careful introspection,

<sup>1</sup> *The Fathers of Greek Philosophy*, by R. D. Hampden, D.D., Bishop of Hereford. Edinburgh : Adam and Charles Black, 1862.

and have been the fruitful source of conclusions as startling as they are various and contradictory. The art of drawing inferences about matters of fact from the crude notions which an ignorant nation has embodied in its early language, has been practised by wise men and by foolish men, and with about the same result ; the existence of a God has been proved and has been disproved with about equal certainty ; and yet when we ask what results have been obtained, what laws have been revealed, what discoveries have been made of any service, even if their correctness be assumed, the answer we shall receive will depend entirely on the individual to whom we happen to address ourselves, or the volume which we may happen to consult ; and we shall learn that the so-called science is one whose principles and conclusions are alike unsettled, and that the one point on which its professors are agreed is, that their labours, even if crowned with success, can never be of any service to any human being. We may assume, therefore, without presumption, that a method which has done nothing in the past, and which does not even promise to contribute in any way to the happiness or progress of mankind, may be set down as worthless without further examination.

To reason high  
Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate —  
And find no end, in wandering mazes lost,

was regarded by Milton as a fitting occupation for the aristocracy of the lower world. We may be well contented, therefore, to leave these matters where we find them, and not suffer ourselves to be troubled with them before our time. Our energies are too precious for it to be worth our while to waste them on the discussion of elaborate nonsense ; our lives are too short for us to need to realize, by anticipation, the torments of the second death.

It is not probable, however, that any, who have not either a pecuniary or theological interest in the matter, will contend in the present day that Metaphysics are of any value. Our tendency is rather to run into the opposite extreme, and to regret that the attention of educated men should ever have been turned to them. We feel their present worthlessness too keenly for it to be easy for us to realize their great value in the past. In the intellectual development of modern Europe they discharged a most important office, partly by stimulating into action faculties that might otherwise have continued dormant; partly as the natural and necessary solvent of a still more irrational system of theology; but it does not lie within the compass of the present article to trace the history of their services in the Middle Ages. We are concerned at present only with the form they assumed in Greece, which we may consider, with sufficient accuracy, as the land of their origin, and with the doctrines of two or three of their most eminent Greek teachers.

We shall find it the more easy to look with tolerance, and even with favour, upon the eccentricities of Greek thought, if we can bear constantly in mind the position which Greece occupied in the general history of civilization. It was her office to develop as completely as possible every part of human nature, to bring into action every faculty which man is capable of exercising. Fortunately for herself, and still more fortunately for us, she had escaped from the trammels of theocracy, and theocracy would have furnished at that time the only possible system of a really national discipline. Divided by geographical and other causes into a number of petty states, which could offer no political career to the faculties of her ablest citizens; engaged in a long series of almost incessant wars, which resulted in no conquest; and this at a time when the industrial classes had not emerged from slavery, and

when science was only nascent ; she allowed the fullest and freest scope to every variety of individual development. The conditions were not yet ascertained under which alone the discovery of truth is possible ; the course of events had not yet proceeded far enough to guide man to a conscious perception of his real and proper destiny ; and it was therefore inevitable that men, subjected to no sufficient intellectual or moral guidance, should propose to themselves impossible objects of inquiry, and should be liable to fall into every kind of error, alike in their aim and method. From the mass of speculators who arose under these anomalous conditions, Dr. Hampden has selected three immortal names—Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and to these he has assigned the position of ‘The Fathers of Greek Philosophy.’

The volume bearing the above title is in substance a reprint from several articles which have appeared in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It contains, in addition to a life of each of the three, and a general estimate of their relative positions, a summary of the doctrines they taught, and of the contents of such of their writings as have survived to us. Nearly half the entire space is allotted to Socrates ; but with the name of Socrates that of Plato is connected so intimately that it is quite impossible to separate them. The account, therefore, which Dr. Hampden has given of the teaching of Socrates is taken indeed, in part, from Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, but necessarily consists chiefly of an analysis of some of Plato’s *Dialogues*.

It has always been a question of interest how far the Platonic Socrates is of Plato’s own creation ; and how far, if at all, he can be taken as representing what Socrates really was and really taught. Plato, as is well known, puts forward nothing in his own name ; and in every dialogue, with the single exception of *the Laws* the chief speaker

is Socrates. We are compelled, therefore, either to suppose that Plato's philosophy was identical with that of him whom he called his master; or to assign to Socrates only as much as we know from other sources belongs to him, and to accept the rest as Plato's own, although delivered to us under the name and authority of another. This separation has scarcely been attempted by Dr. Hampden, who thought, perhaps, that precision on such a subject was unattainable. It is beyond any doubt, however, that the 'Doctrine of Ideas' must be regarded as Plato's; and if this point is conceded, it is obvious how little we ought to look in Plato for an account of the real Socrates. The doctrine is introduced or implied in every dialogue; it is the very centre of Plato's entire system of philosophy; it is the one assumption, without which and its corollaries, philosophy itself, as Plato conceived of it, was impossible. We must be content, therefore, to look elsewhere for our knowledge of Socrates' teaching. The Doctrine of Ideas did not belong to Socrates; and the Doctrine of Ideas is implied in nearly every sentence which Plato has assigned to him.

The Doctrine of Ideas is one of the strangest conceptions in the entire history of Metaphysical thought. It is difficult to state it in English without making its wild absurdity so evident, that it is not easy to conceive that any one could have maintained it seriously. And yet in Plato's Dialogues it is treated so exquisitely that its absurdity never occurs to us, and it stands out rather as a Divine revelation than as the fancy of a madman. The doctrine was briefly this: that every class of objects in Nature, or, more correctly still, every common noun in the Greek language, had, corresponding to it, an Eternal Idea of the Divine mind; and that the individual objects which composed the class, or were denoted by the common noun, derived their own essence, and their relation to one

another, from some mysterious participation in the Divine Idea corresponding to them. Thus certain actions were called just, because they participated in the Divine Idea of justice ; certain objects were called chairs or tables, because they too participated in a corresponding Idea, not less divine or less eternal than that of justice itself. It was the aim and office of philosophy to train the faculties, until they rose, from a knowledge of individual acts or objects, to the contemplation of the Ideas to which they were related ; science was of no value, experience was a blind guide, unless this result were attained ; for the highest wisdom was that by which the mind of man became so assimilated to Divinity, that it could behold, as it were in a vision, these eternal and immutable existences. To be gifted with such a power of intuition was the privilege, not of the many, but of the few ; and he who possessed it, was possessed thereby of all knowledge. He alone was the wise man, and could look down contemptuously on those who knew only what they had learned empirically from the observed order of nature. Such labours therefore as those of Newton, or Bichat, the wise man would have regarded as directed to an unworthy object, and as undeserving the attention of one to whom a higher revelation was granted. He might have admitted that they had succeeded, certainly, in co-ordinating phenomena ; but he would have assigned them a level lower infinitely than his own, because they had never contemplated Ideas.

This, then, was the dogma upon which, in the last analysis, Plato based his system of philosophy. The use to which he put it, was one that agreed very well with the mysterious nature of the dogma itself. For these Ideas were suprasensual, and required the development of a special faculty before they could be rightly apprehended. The contemplation of them, therefore, furnished the philo-



sophical teacher with a species of knowledge to which his disciples had no access. They were to the Platonic Socrates very much what the Corpus Juris was to the early English judges, although we must admit that the principles supplied by the latter were more precise, and, in theory at least, amenable, as the former were not, to the ordinary laws of logic. The manner of many of the Platonic Dialogues is very uniform. A conversation is reported, in the course of which some word is brought under discussion, and various definitions of it criticized. Justice, for example, or holiness, or virtue, or courage, or any other word in common use among men, but the connotation of which has not been fixed with any great precision—these words, or others such as these, are made the subjects of a series of questions addressed by Socrates to his opponents; and the conversation proceeds until some answer has been elicited contradictory to an answer previously given. The contradiction is then pointed out, and the victory of course remains with Socrates, who has advanced no theory of his own; and who breaks off the discussion with mysterious hints that he is in possession of a higher kind of knowledge about these matters, but that to disclose it would be only casting his pearls before swine, so that he prefers to keep it still a mystery. These little narratives are elaborated with consummate art; they captivate our attention by the perfection of their form and language; and hold us so entirely captive that we acquiesce contentedly in the position which Socrates assumes; and are ready and willing to concede to him everything that he wishes to require of us. We feel as Socrates himself was compelled to acknowledge he felt in some measure towards the poets, whom he nevertheless would have condemned and banished from his model city. Our cooler judgement may tell us that we have learned nothing; but, while we were reading, our judgement was

lulled to sleep. We have been laid, as it were, under a spell, and are unwilling to free ourselves from it, and quite ready to subject ourselves once more to its literally magic force. We have seemed to ourselves elevated for a while above the region of phenomena : we have been taught to look down upon this earth of ours as upon the scene of a lower life : we have been on the point of being initiated into some higher state of being, but our guide and master has suddenly left us, and has alleged our inability to follow him if he were still willing to lead the way. We have been kept in expectation of some disclosure of transcendent importance, but the hope has been left unsatisfied. We have been standing, as it were, on holy ground ; but the divinity present has been concealed under a veil, and we have been unable to lift the covering. It may have been a dream and a delusion, all of it ; but it is a delusion of which we have been the willing victims, and a dream from which we are sorry to awake.

The writings of Plato have been the source of pleasure to men so eminent, they are the means of arousing feelings in us apparently so pure and noble, that it may perhaps appear a kind of desecration if we venture to doubt their usefulness. We have no right, it may be said, to intrude such a question at all : for it is not by a calculation of loss and profit that Plato is to be judged ; we must seek out another standard, and not attempt to measure the value of that which is above all value and all price. To look for results is a manifest error and injustice, where results have not been aimed at. It is enough and more than enough if Plato has in any degree attained his object ; and that object was, certainly, not conceived in the spirit of a utilitarian philosophy. To quote the words of Dr. Hampden, who appears to be defending Plato, in something of the above spirit, against those who would find fault with some points of detail, and, further, with some of the

principles interwoven into his plan of a perfect commonwealth: 'The true vindication of his theory is, after all, to be found in the fact that he is shadowing out a divine life, rather than describing the outline of a state. It is, perhaps, only doing justice to his design to say, that he was unconsciously feeling in the dark, while the sun of Gospel-Truth was as yet far below the horizon, after that "kingdom of God which is within us," the *πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς*, of which an Apostle speaks,—dimly and confusedly, as in a dream, anticipating, amidst the surrounding thick darkness, that period when the things of this world shall have passed away; and when there will be "neither marrying nor giving in marriage," but all will be "as the angels of God in heaven."' And again: 'He was not constructing a polity of this world—he was not making laws for any one form of government known among men, but building up and regulating an invisible internal polity in the souls of men, and training them for immortality.'

The above extracts may be taken as illustrating, not unfairly, the point of view from which Dr. Hampden regards the Platonic philosophy, and the line of argument by which he is prepared to defend it. We cannot profess to consider the defence a sufficient one; the passages quoted appear, indeed, to contain the germ of those very objections which have been advanced with fatal force against the almost acknowledged tendencies of the Platonic system of philosophy. That system was distinctly revolutionary. It is quite certain that Plato's teaching must have tended to unfit men for the world in which they live at present. It must have led them, as far as its influence extended, to reject, as unworthy of attention, the most certain knowledge to which the intellect of man can reach. It withdrew them from any care for the practical amelioration of the state of society which they found around them, and would thus have made them of necessity

bad citizens ; it discouraged the life of the affections, and would thus have made them of necessity bad men. Offended at the defects and vices of the system under which he lived—at the men and manners which he saw around him at Athens, Plato was prepared to reject entirely the positive teaching of the past, and to found a new order upon new laws and principles. His theory of the perfection of human nature was based, not upon the regulation, but upon the destruction, of the leading instincts of individual and domestic life. We may admit with Dr. Hampden the ‘boldness and originality’ of the contriver of such a polity ; we may admit the perfection of the form in which the dialogues have invariably been composed, the exquisite choice of language, the union of perfect nature and perfect art with which their progress is conducted. It would hardly be possible, on such points as these, in any degree to overstate their merits. They have reached us, after the lapse of centuries, as fresh as if they had been the work of yesterday. They are written for immortality, and have nothing to fear from the oblivion and neglect of time ; but it is scarcely upon such perfections as these that their author can be assigned the highest place among ‘the Fathers of Greek Philosophy.’

It is a usual view, and in some degree a correct one, to regard Plato as the master and Aristotle as his ablest pupil. And yet when we turn from Plato to Aristotle we feel that the difference between them is not that the pupil accepted the master’s system, and developed it beyond the actual conceptions of its founder, but rather that he rejected, consciously and deliberately, all its most essential doctrines, and substituted for them a creed that was based, not upon revelation, but upon careful inductive thought. The high position which Plato claimed for himself, in the person of his ideal Socrates—the position of one who stood above the teaching of experience—and had attained

an insight into necessary and eternal truths, Aristotle neither asserted as his own nor admitted in his master's favour. It was not only that he made many parts of his master's system the objects of direct attack ; he did more than attack them, more even than refute them, with success. He entirely neglected them in the construction of his own system, and substituted for them other doctrines and another method of thought. It is not uncommon for men, who have themselves somewhat of an aversion to positive science, and a strong tendency to confuse their reason with the mysteries of metaphysics, to assert that Aristotle's criticisms, however powerful, were none the less provoked rather by a consciousness of his own inferiority than by the desire to combat error ; and that his method was adopted only because he felt himself unable to employ the higher method of Plato. We can discern in Aristotle no traces whatever of this conscious inferiority. He appears rather to have felt secure in his own grasp of truth, and to have judged Plato (to quote the words of Mr. Congreve) 'with the composure of a superior mind.' He may have known, perhaps, that as an artist Plato far excelled him, and yet his own sketches of character and manners are drawn with the pencil of a master. His command of precise language, for the expression of precise thought, is as wonderful, at least, as Plato's singular facility for more lengthened and more elaborated descriptions ; his illustrations are less highly wrought, and, separately judged, are less beautiful ; but the terseness and power of his style has something in it beyond mere artistic merit. He may have loved Plato, he may have honoured him, he may have had reason to confess to him no common debt of gratitude : we can see no warrant for supposing either that he was constrained unwillingly to recognize him as his own superior, or that he failed in any way to apprehend his teaching.

There was much, undoubtedly, which Aristotle received from Plato; much which he made his own by adding greatly to doctrines hitherto imperfect, or, by separating truth and falsehood where they had been mixed, apparently inextricably, in one complex system. And there was very much too of Plato's philosophy which he either openly attacked or the falsehood of which he assumed, without troubling himself to discuss and prove it; only marking his sense of its presence by putting himself a little out of the way to state the contrary. But his most valuable speculations bear but few traces of the influence of his master's teaching, if, indeed, we can venture to use such terms as master and pupil to describe the relations that subsisted between them. Dr. Hampden's language on this subject appears to us to be wanting in precision; he describes their connexion as having been more real and close than an examination of their writings can warrant, and yet he never tells us very exactly what doctrines of Aristotle, important enough to bear out his language, were derived either from or through Plato. He rather takes refuge in the statement of generalities, expressed with that peculiarity of diction which has the form and appearance of thought without the power, and so, conveying no very precise information, does yet leave an impression on the reader's mind which we cannot but believe erroneous. Our space will not allow us to quote his words at sufficient length to make it clear that we are not misrepresenting them, but the following extracts are no unfairly-chosen specimens. Plato's philosophy, he tells us, 'was concerned, we find, more in investigating and establishing first principles than in drawing out results; in exciting the love of wisdom rather than in aiding in the research after it.' It was left for his pupil, Aristotle, to take up the business of philosophy where he had designedly left it unfinished, and, by a more rigorous

method, to introduce order into the field of science by assigning to each particular science its distinct objects and office. In Aristotle's system, accordingly, we see the productiveness of those germs of philosophy which the genius of Plato had planted and reared. Others cultivated the germs themselves, and some fostered them into a wild luxuriance. It was by being engrafted on 'the sturdy stock of Aristotle's mind that they received fresh vigour and produced fruits, though not strictly their own, yet partaking of their life and richness. And thus has Aristotle been justly described, by an ancient critic, as the most genuine disciple of Plato.'

There is really no warrant whatever for adopting this conclusion; the reasons which are given for it amount to little more than a statement that Plato and Aristotle wrote partly upon the same subjects, that Plato wrote at random, and threw out suggestions which his so-called pupil did not follow up; but that he contrived, nevertheless, to excite a love for wisdom by assuming the possession of it, and putting himself into intellectual postures accordingly. It would be far better to consider their systems as entirely independent, than to employ language so vague and illusory: it would be a nearer approximation to the truth to assert that the chief stimulus which Plato supplied to Aristotle, was through the revulsion of mind with which Aristotle turned from his master's speculative follies. The above extracts are by no means the only instances of Dr. Hampden's decided tendency to substitute sound for sense, and to make a rhetorical abuse of language excuse the absence, or in some degree supply the place, of anything like accuracy or precision. It is most frequent in his chapter on Plato; it is most out of place in his chapter on Aristotle. In the former chapter, moreover, there are some passages so intensely foolish that we can excuse them only when we remember that their author is

a bishop whose reputation for orthodoxy was at one time somewhat questionable, though it is not to these alone that our remarks will apply. It is curious, for example, to find Dr. Hampden deriving Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul from 'ancient traditions—traditions mounting up beyond all memory of their origin, and *therefore* referable to times when the world was yet fresh from the hands of God'; or discovering in the wild nonsense of the *Timaeus* 'at once the sure and widespread knowledge resulting from a Scriptural Revelation, and the obscurity and fallibility of the information of Tradition.' It is creditable to the bishop's sagacity that he has found means of introducing at once a word in favour of the Bible, and a word against the Church of Rome. Chance must have combined with genius before results so happy could have been attained from such a source. There may indeed be nonsense, even greater than the above, before Plato is dismissed from notice; there may be a more determined 'submission of the intellect' in such assertions as that 'traces of the descent of holy truth appear in the references found in Plato to early deluges and genealogies; to the notion of God as the Shepherd of His people; and to accounts of variations in the course of the rising and setting of the sun'; but they do not display the same ingenuity of combined attack and defence. It is curious, however, that one who could become their author should ever have been considered 'dangerous.' We may perhaps find in them some confirmation of the charitable view that his earlier works were written under the evil influence of another, to which alone their 'objectionable' tendencies are referable; and we may suppose that the 'danger' is over, now that that influence has been removed.

The writings of Aristotle do not, under Dr. Hampden's management, afford the same indirect confirmation of Biblical truths as the more desultory passages of Plato.



They are rather employed to show how much, and yet how little, mere human wisdom can avail for our guidance ; and accordingly they are rather made to prove by their deficiencies the necessity of a Divine revelation, than to lend any additional testimony to the character of its contents. The great fault throughout Dr. Hampden's volume is the total absence of anything like the 'historical method.' Discussions which have no value whatever, except in relation to the times in which they originated, are treated gravely as proposing questions, which it is some concern of ours to answer ; and a somewhat vague analysis of the contents of Aristotle's or Plato's writings is substituted, almost entirely, for an intelligent estimate of their historical value and position. It is possible that their author may have feared to admit what he may have regarded as a dangerous principle of criticism. We believe his fear to have been quite unfounded. Greek philosophy must gain and not lose in importance when its proper place has been assigned to it in the course of man's development ; while the consequence of giving way to such an apprehension has been that there is no class of readers whatever to which Dr. Hampden's work can be of any great interest or importance. As a page in the history of the course of human thought, it is quite unworthy of attention : to young men at Oxford who are working up their philosophy for the schools, it is not precise enough to be of any value ; and, moreover, a good 'coach,' or Browne's *Analysis of the Ethics*, would furnish the same kind of information in a much better and clearer form.

We have spoken already of the revolutionary character of Plato's political philosophy. Not contented with assigning a fictitious origin to society, he was prepared to deal with mankind as united in their domestic and political life by no natural laws which might become the

study of a strictly inductive science. Human nature was, he considered, so plastic ; its guiding principles were so susceptible of artificial modification, while the goal to which it was tending already was so entirely mistaken or undiscovered, that politics, as he treated them, become a mere abstract discussion about the best state and the best institutions, with no regard whatever to the statical and dynamical laws to which mankind are necessarily subject. It may be urged, and with justice, in his defence, that there were as yet no sufficient data for the discovery of social dynamics. A longer experience was necessary before the wisest of mankind could arrive at a conscious appreciation of the future fortunes of their race. The 'something of prophetic vein' is not within a child's attainment, and the Greek race stood, so to speak, in the position of children, whose lives and history were to form, in part, the materials of a knowledge by which human civilization might be directed. It would be absurd, therefore, to judge them by a standard to which they were unable to conform, or to require of them the results of thought, the necessary data for which experience had not yet supplied.

But although no one absolute criterion can be applied to the theorists or philosophers of any period in the past, although each age must be judged by a criterion of its own, and its prominent men considered as deserving or undeserving of notice now, with little reference to a standard of excellence which has become attainable only by the long efforts of succeeding generations, yet even so we are not left without the means of determining who are the real giants of the old world. Each age may supply at least its own proper standard, and we may compare men with their own contemporaries ; while the course of time has taught us pretty certainly to discriminate between a system that has passed away, and has borne no fruit,

and one that has formed a genuine link between the intellectual life of the past and present, and so has really aided the onward movement of society—a system that has struck, as it were, its own roots deep into the past, and has borne fruit far on into the distant future.

If we judge thus of the chief individual organs by whose aid the intellectual development of Greece was accomplished, we may well dispute the right of two of the so-called Fathers of Greek Philosophy to the rank which Dr. Hampden has assigned to them. We may well ask what have been the functions of Plato and Socrates in the general course of the progress of human knowledge; what fruit their speculations have borne that can deserve our notice now, and can assert a present claim upon our gratitude. To such a question as this Dr. Hampden's volume will supply no answer, and we should venture, without hesitation, not only to question, but to deny utterly their right to so high a dignity. If it were necessary to fix on three names to whom all that Greece really effected may be referred more truly than to any others, we should name as the three most eminent, Thales, Pythagoras, and Aristotle. Thales, under whom speculation was disentangled from its earlier connexion with theology, and an explanation sought for the origin and course of nature that was not dependent upon the fictions of a polytheistic mythology. It matters little how impossible it may have been that the proposed objects of speculations could ever have become the objects of really scientific thought. The aim of Thales and his method may have been alike deficient; we can allow this, and yet insist upon his title as pre-eminently the 'father' of Greek philosophy. Pythagoras, whose great claim to our regard may be based, not only upon his real eminence as a mathematician, but upon the fact that, while science was still in her infancy, he employed in the explanation of

natural phenomena the only positive conceptions which had as yet been attained, and so foreshadowed the more exact synthesis of a period when the truly scientific spirit should be extended to all departments of knowledge, and should guide mankind into all truth to which the faculties of their intellect permit them ever to arrive. And Aristotle, who stood without a rival during a long course of centuries—*il maestro di color che sanno*—and whose fuller appreciation was reserved for an age which raised its own intellectual structure upon foundations which he had laid, and was enabled to press forward beyond its master, only because it had recognized how necessary it was to follow his steps and to adopt his method.

The claim of Aristotle to a place among the three first names of Greece will probably pass unquestioned. Dr. Hampden has done right in asserting it, though he has failed to see the grounds on which it rests; and the general sense of mankind has always recognized its validity. The claims of Thales and Pythagoras are more obscure, and we should gladly justify their selection at a greater length than our present limits can permit. Perhaps, however, it may be thought sufficient to rest, without further proof, on the authority of Mr. Grote (*Hist.* vol. i. chap. xvi), as at least establishing their eminent services to philosophy. After speaking at some length on the Grecian myths, as the Greeks themselves felt and interpreted them, he ascribes distinctly the transition from theology to science to the influence of Thales and Pythagoras. He joins with them, indeed, the name of Xenophanes, but, it would appear, only as the earliest representative of the Eleatic doctrine. His influence was less<sup>1</sup> permanent than that of the other two, and his teaching less scientific.

<sup>1</sup> If this statement is called in question—if it is considered that the originator of a body of doctrine from which Plato derived so much

In the scheme of ideas (says Mr. Grote) common to Homer, and to the Hesiodic Theogony, we find nature distributed into a variety of personal agencies, administered according to the volition of different Beings more or less analogous to man—each of these Beings having his own character, attributes, and powers; his own sources of pain and pleasure, and his own especial sympathies or antipathies with human individuals. The Gods, properly so called—those who bore a proper name, and received some public or family worship—were the most commanding and capital members amidst this vast network of agents, visible and invisible, spread over the universe. The whole view of nature was purely religious and subjective, the spontaneous suggestion of the early mind. The first attempt to disenthral the philosophic intellect from this all-personifying religious faith, and to constitute a method of interpreting nature distinct from the spontaneous inspirations of untaught minds, is to be found in Thales, Xenophanes, and Pythagoras. It is in them that we first find the idea of Person tacitly set aside or limited, and an impersonal Nature conceived as the object of study.

If we look only to the immediate results of this change in the direction of physical researches, we may be tempted to estimate it below its real importance. 'Metaphysical eidôla,' and 'an exaggerated application of certain narrow physical theories,' may seem of little more value than the class of notions they supplanted; but Mr. Grote justly reminds us that such results are, none the less, in strict accordance with the laws indicated by the most profound study of the course of human development. The transition from the fictions of the imagination to the laws of exact science can take place only through the means of such conceptions. They were a real advance upon the previous state of thought, to which they were so much opposed as

of the distinctive character of his system, cannot be described correctly as having exercised an influence less permanent than that of Thales and Pythagoras—we can only reply that the passage in the text was written after a careful estimate of the real value of such an influence; that, under Plato's guidance, philosophy separated from science, became 'barren,' and fruitful only in fancies and verbal quibbles; and that his followers, however numerous, have done nothing to clear themselves from the charge which thus attaches to their master's memory.

to be quite shocking to the religious feeling of the multitude. Plato's name may stand higher in common estimation than that of Thales or of Pythagoras ; but his method was as marked a retrogression as theirs was an advance. While we may consider Thales, therefore, as the father of positive science, we must look for Plato's modern followers among those who, from time to time, have exercised a merely negative or disturbing influence in science, or politics, or religion. For such men as these have worked in the true spirit of their illustrious Greek ancestor ; and from such a parentage has been derived the mushroom brood of useless heresies and wild Utopias which have died out from time to time as individual conceptions, but whose species must be immortal as long as men are to be found who prefer to dream rather than to think, and who set aside the real teaching of the past, to substitute the suggestions of a fancied inspiration, which is rather the product of an impatient vanity, than of any genuine wish either to serve their Gods, or to benefit their fellow-men.

We have said but a few words about Aristotle. To determine with precision his place in the history of science, would be little less than to furnish an account of all eminent discoverers before and after him. To give even an analysis of his own writings would be a task of greater length than our present limits could allow. Of those writings, some, notwithstanding their transcendent merit, have been practically superseded by later authorities. Others have maintained their place still, and, in spite of the after labours of his successors, are now recognized as almost indispensable to a proper study of the subjects of which they treat. To this latter class may be assigned the *Organon*, the *Rhetoric*, and the treatise *Περὶ Ψυχῆς*, a title for which there exists no precise English equivalent. 'On the Vital Principle' has been proposed, but is fairly open to objection as metaphysical. 'On Vitality' would

be correct, but would probably convey an erroneous conception as to the contents of a volume which was concerned with the moral and intellectual life of man, and not only with his lower animal functions. We call attention to the point, which may seem, perhaps, of trifling importance, because it illustrates one great advantage which the Greek philosopher enjoyed over the modern Englishman or German. It is true that he knew no language except his own, and was liable, accordingly, to be led into error by discussing, elaborately, problems which were based upon merely verbal accidents. But it must be remembered, on the other hand, that that language did not contain a vast number of words, such as may be found in our own, incapable of having any precise scientific meaning attached to them, and therefore, of course, supplying the metaphysician with his most handy and most irresistible weapons; and apt, too, to mislead the honest inquirer, who may fancy himself upon the high road to truth, while he is employed at best in the discussion of names—names without any corresponding reality, and sometimes without any corresponding notion, representing only the rough guesses of our ancestors, whose opinions we set no great store by when they reach us in any other form.

Chief among the works which in the long course of time have been superseded, and which possess for us little other value than as illustrating the times in which they were written, must be placed the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, the most perfect key to the genuine Greek conceptions of individual and social life. But if we remember all that has been done in the interval since these were written, how that city life, which formed the Greek ideal, has been replaced by the vast aggregate of nationalities which have constituted Western Europe; and how gradually there has been brought about the

substitution of defensive for aggressive war, the emancipation of the industrial classes and of women, the separation of the temporal and spiritual powers, and the cultivation of universal love as the leading principle of morality, we may see how wide a gulf must separate us from the times in which these great results had not yet been attempted, and how little we could accept the details, or even the principles, of Greek ethics and politics. The task of Aristotle was to arrange, from the scanty materials with which the past had furnished him, the best possible constitution for the state and the individual. He did not set aside the lessons which experience had taught; his scheme throughout was conservative, not revolutionary; and though it assigned to the individual, as the highest form of existence, a life of contemplation, which ended in itself, and 'cast no beams upon society'; and though he isolated his state so completely that international duties were practically abolished, while he recognized, at the same time, many of the worst social evils of the age as necessary and constant elements in the social organization, yet he stands ennobled for ever, as the first to apply a scientific method to the principles of morals and politics, and to recognize, however imperfectly, the presence of immutable law, where Plato had discerned nothing but a wide field for his imagination to run riot in, and a long succession of phenomena, which he believed himself capable of modifying at pleasure into any forms which the freak of the moment might suggest. It is the peculiar praise of Aristotle to have discarded utterly these foolish fancies of his master, and to have been contented to work with a less ambitious aim, and with a far more laborious method, towards the attainment of results which he had a right to consider possible. In the true spirit of modern philosophy, he dismissed alike the notion of an arbitrary and an absolute standard in the different depart-



ments of the science of human nature. His view throughout was strictly relative, though his judgements were formed necessarily after the lessons of a shorter experience than our own. We may admire, therefore, the spirit in which he laboured, though we may claim to set aside his decisions wherever they conflict with the teaching of a past, which to Aristotle was a distant future. Whatever there may be of truth in the story that his works for several centuries were lost, it proves at least how little their value was recognized by his more immediate successors. For more than a thousand years they were cast aside for the flimsy productions of later Greek philosophy. It was not until the germs of positive science had been introduced into Europe by the Arabians, that their vast superiority began, at length, to be appreciated. Since that period they have been regarded continually with an ever-increasing honour. The growth of the human intellect has both been fostered by their influence, and has been itself necessary in order that their true importance might be discerned. The rise and fall of religious creeds and systems of philosophy have done nothing to impair their value. The altered conditions of society have affected them no further than as limiting their practical application. They are written for immortality, and have stamped themselves so deeply upon the thought of the past, that it is not possible that they can be neglected in the most distant future which we can anticipate.

### III.

#### HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION<sup>1</sup>.

THERE are not many historical periods about which the opinions and sentiments of Englishmen have varied as much, within the course of a few years, as they have about the great French Revolution. To our fathers and grand-fathers, France was already a natural object of dislike and contempt; but, at the close of the last century, their aversion was intensified into active hatred, and enraged almost to madness, by the fearful tales of horror and bloodshed which reached them from beyond the narrow seas, or were invented *intra quatuor maria* to satisfy their craving for that species of intelligence. They counted for nothing the long centuries of wrongs and injustice that were then so fearfully avenged; the good, too, that was done, was unappreciated or unheard of; the heroic virtues of the time, the courage, the endurance, the single devotion to an unselfish cause, were either disbelieved in or passed by with a curse or a sneer. They heard only, that in France all regard for Divine or human law had been flung aside; that innocent blood was daily poured forth with no mercy, and with no pity; that no rank or order was any longer sacred; no age or sex a protection against the people's fury. And when, one after another, the chief leaders of the people perished, struck down in

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, par Louis Blanc. 12 vols. Paris: Furne et Cie.

succession by the storm they could no longer guide, the tidings of their fate were received only with feelings of stern pleasure. Our ancestors had no pardon for their errors—no sympathy, even for their cause. We need say nothing of the events that followed—the rapid successes of the French arms, and their slower but sure reverses; until, when England had won her last great victory, and Paris, a second time, was entered by the allied armies, the news was accepted as decisive, and the result as final, and it was believed that the last act of the French Revolution was now closed for ever.

We have since learned better. We have learned, at least, that the power of kings and emperors to create or destroy is, after all, confined within narrow limits; and that the armed forces of Europe can do nothing against those changes which the past has rendered inevitable. For the French Revolution was no accidental outbreak of a people's madness; no local disorder that the course of a few years might be enough to produce and to terminate. It had its roots fixed deeply in the past, and its consequences extending far into the unseen future. It was possible, only because faith and loyalty had turned away for ever from the objects of their former worship. The church and throne that had been flung down could be restored; so much of outward change it lay within the will of Europe to determine and accomplish; but between the past and present there lay the memory of an hour when the people had held for a while the title and the right of majesty—when the Church had proclaimed officially before the world the falsehood of her own doctrines; and it was felt and known that no force could restore a dominion which could command no reverence, and that the times had gone by in which Frenchmen could be taught by priests or governed by Divine sanction.

And we have learned, too, that the worst scenes of the

French Revolution are not marked off, as was once believed, from all others, standing alone in the horror of their excessive cruelties. Good was, at least, mixed largely with the evil ; and, if the leaders of the day were not without their crimes, still less were they without their virtues. Such deeds as theirs have been done before and since, and done from viler motives ; and we can look back with sorrow rather than indignation upon the strange earnestness of patriots preparing war against the world, in the interests of universal peace, and plying the guillotine daily in the name of universal love. There is no danger, even now, that we should pass too light a judgement upon the rough means which they employed to effect their purpose. The cause for which they contended has been too much sullied, and the hour of its triumph too long deferred, for us ever to forget the reasons for its disgrace and failure. To their excesses it has, at least in part, been owing, that Europe has been unable, since, to regard the brotherhood of mankind as anything but another name for the reign of murderers and scoundrels, or to hear, without the very gloomiest forebodings, of the advent of 'the days of peace.' Let us now take M. Louis Blanc as our guide, and endeavour to trace the causes of the Revolution, and the scenes with which it opened.

In discussing the antecedents of any wide and important movements, it is not easy to determine at what precise point we should begin. Obviously, the period immediately preceding the change, when all things were already ripe, and required only the occasion to develop them into active life, needs itself to be accounted for. The cause, when we have found it, is the effect of an earlier condition ; and that too is determined, not less truly, by the circumstances that preceded it. So that if we extend our search back to the very sources of the Revolution, we may be sure that they will continually recede, and escape our grasp ; until

we find ourselves at length at the starting-point of history, at the cradle of the human race, with the task before us of supplying the intermediate links between fetichism and civilization—between the savage wanderers of the plain and of the forest, and the statesmen and philosophers of France at the close of the eighteenth century.

We scarcely need say that we have no intention of presuming so far as this upon the time and attention of our readers. Such inquiries beyond doubt have a real value of their own, grotesque as may appear the contrast, and slender the connexion between their two extremes; but we need not enter upon them here; although, indeed, a proper appreciation of any period of history involves, at least, an implied theory of the whole. We may perceive readily enough that the winds are blowing hard, and that the waves threaten; but we must have learned the ship's course, and whither she is bound, if we are to tell whether she has held on her way truly in spite of them. A bare knowledge of the facts, as they are called, of history, without the guidance of a theory to explain their meaning, is about as really useful for purposes of science, as the former species of information would be to enable a captain to guide his vessel into harbour.

It may be enough, then, for our present purpose if we look back into the past as far as the great organization which preceded the course of, properly, Modern History; that is, to the constitution of the Middle Ages, resting on the double basis of Catholicism and the Feudal system. From that period to the present the revolution has in truth extended. The Feudal system fell necessarily in France, as the crown united in itself the various functions of Government, trampling down in succession the individuals or classes who opposed themselves to its further progress. And Catholicism fell, too, when its distinctive doctrines had ceased to command the belief of educated Europe. In

some countries its place was supplied by the acceptance of a new system, hailed almost as another revelation from Heaven, and passing in its degrees of difference from the Lutheran faith of Germany to the more negative doctrines of Calvin, and Zwingli, and Socinus. But such a charge as this was possible only where the teaching of Catholicism had not already been absolutely discredited<sup>1</sup>. Elsewhere there was no sufficient stimulus to induce educated men to lend their aid in recasting a system which they considered merely provisional. The State, they thought, might support it in its present form, as well as in any other. The common people might continue to believe a little more as well as a little less of a creed which they had not yet learned was merely a useful fiction; but in both countries alike, in Catholic as well as Protestant, the Church descended from her former position of independence, and rested now on the support of the temporal power; while the energies and thought of Europe, roused to intenser life, were henceforward directed to supplant the old sacerdotal-military *régime* by the new creation, or rather the new development of an industrial and scientific system.

In the course of such a change as this it was inevitable that the old should be destroyed more rapidly than the new could be created. It was inevitable, because the work of destruction is more pleasant, and by far less laborious. And it was inevitable, too, because the old system, whatever portion of it was yet preserved in detail,

<sup>1</sup> 'La France,' says M. Renan, 'est, à peu près, dénuée d'initiative religieuse. Si la France avait été capable de se créer un mouvement religieux qui lui fût propre, elle serait devenue protestante. La France est le pays du monde le plus orthodoxe, car c'est le plus indifférent en religion. Innover en théologie, c'est croire à la théologie. Or la France a trop d'esprit pour être jamais un pays théologique.'—*Études d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 397.

necessarily perished as a whole when any vital part of it had been destroyed. It could no longer appear competent to guide the intellect into all truth, or command the veneration and active obedience of the noblest portion of humanity. Its synthesis was defective, or, in other words, it explained a portion of phenomena, and regulated a part of conduct by principles which it could not adapt to all, or push to their logical conclusions even as regarded the subjects to which they were yet applied. And the new system was not as yet prepared to take its place. It laboured under the same defects, under the same imperfections in its application. Its different parts were worked out gradually and in detail, instinctively rather than methodically; and the scope and limit of its various functions were as yet imperfectly determined, while the appearance of its disorder was, at first, only increased by its growth, and by the continual accessions which it received in detail, in the absence of any organizing principle which could bring its parts into relations of mutual harmony—which could breathe, as it were, upon the tangled mass of complicated and apparently unrelated systems, and inspire them with its own fullness and perfection of ordered life. It must be a matter of regret for ever that, at a time when, in spite of its vast capacities for the future, the newly fashioned world of Europe was as yet without form and void—that, at such a time as this, the retrograde action of the French monarchy brought on before its time a crisis that had been long inevitable, and precipitated a vast outburst of popular madness and anarchy, which, though no wisdom of man could have avoided it altogether, might yet have been less violent, and less disastrous in its immediate results, had it been provoked a little less, and delayed a little longer.

The central idea of French progress had been the growth of the king's power. Under his protection the

commons were gradually enfranchised, and industry spread among the towns; while both king and commons were united in opposition to the power of the nobility. It would be out of place to point out in detail the steps by which the king's supremacy had been reached; how one enemy after another had been triumphed over, one prerogative after another attained, and its right sanctioned by prescription, until the weak rule and disputed authority of Hugh Capet had been developed by his successors into the plenitude of power that was inherited by Louis XIV. During the period of the king's weakness his instinctive policy had led him to seek the alliance of the commons. Each was necessary to the other; the interests of each had for long been the interests of the other, too. But when this sure bond of union had been weakened; when each was strong enough to stand alone, and had begun to occupy a position not only independent of the other, but often antagonistic, the policy of the king was changed. It had once been his aim to trample down the nobles, and he had succeeded. They had been dangerous as enemies and rivals, but there was a more real affinity between them and an hereditary monarch, than between either and the newly created 'industrial classes.' This reaction had commenced before the time of Louis XIV; but the date of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685, is the one most properly assigned as marking the adoption by the king of a definitely retrogressive policy. Signs were not wanting that it was with impatience that the nation submitted to it. The exhibition of joy and contempt at Louis XIV's funeral proves this sufficiently. But the same policy was persevered in by his successors. Even the kind heart of Louis XVI satisfied itself with private charities. He wished well to his people, but his duties to them as their king he knew nothing of, or ignored. The social influence and pressure



of those who were interested in the maintenance of abuses were strong enough to defeat the wise reforms of Turgot ; but the guilt and excesses of the outbreak which was so soon to follow, may not unfairly be imputed to a monarch who could permit Turgot to fall unsupported by his favour. But we must pass rapidly on to say a few words in detail about the state of things in France which immediately preceded and provoked the French Revolution.

Never before, even during the age of slavery, had the separation been so entire, or the contrast so marked, between the extreme orders in the State. It had been scarcely an affectation in the circle that surrounded the monarch, to be astonished at the discovery that certain animals, apparently bipeds, who had been seen for years past grubbing about in the fields near Paris, were real human beings. But it mattered little by what name they were to be called, or under what genus it might be determined that they fell. Men, or not men, they had none of the rights of citizens, few even of the privileges of slaves. There must exist some community of interest between the slave and his master. There was none felt to exist between the noble and the peasant. Within the towns, the exclusive laws of the various corporations existed only to forbid the people from all hope of bettering their position ; while the weight of an excessive and unequal taxation rendered that position insupportable. There had, in fact, been a change long in progress, similar to that which has transformed the old chieftains of the Highlands into landowners, with complete rights of property. Duties are soon forgotten, when public opinion does not demand their exercise. Rights, precise or indeterminate, which were adapted well enough to a state of things which has passed away, become mere instruments of organized oppression, when, under new social relations, the former

are strictly insisted on, or the latter worked rigidly out to their strict logical results.

The facts which M. Louis Blanc has brought together, reveal a state of society scarcely to be surpassed in its oppressiveness towards the low and weak. The invading march of a Rhadagaisus or an Attila may have been accompanied with greater horrors ; but it lay not within their ingenuity to devise a scheme which should result in so wide and so prolonged a misery. The careless expenses of a lavish and wasteful Government, administered at home for the advantage of the privileged orders only, encumbered with a vast amount of debt created by foreign wars, and resulting, of course, in a disordered state of the public finance, had rendered heavy taxation necessary, if the system, which every noble was interested to maintain, was to continue to be maintained at all. The taxation was not only heavy—it was unequal ; for the privileged classes paid practically nothing. But the worst and the most oppressive circumstance of all consisted in its extreme uncertainty. Many of the taxes were farmed out to the nobles, or held by them almost as private property, and underlet to speculators, whose only aim could be to realize the most by their bargain. And in this they were favoured not only by the ignorance and weakness of the lower orders, which rendered them an easy prey ; but by the complication of the system itself, which made the amount imposed on each individual almost arbitrary. Some of the taxes, too, were laid upon the first necessities of life. Salt was a luxury which it was beyond the poor man's power to obtain. When we are told that five hundred human beings were condemned annually to the galleys for attempting to smuggle salt, we may form some idea of the other effects of the unnatural price to which it had been raised. Let us add to all this the chance to which every poor man was exposed of being

drawn for military service—a chance increased by the numerous exceptions allowed in the classes above him; and let us add, worst perhaps of all, the *corvée*, or system of forced labour, a relic of the slavery from which the people had scarcely yet emerged. The season and the length of this were alike uncertain. It might be demanded when the peasant's little crop was just ripe, and when the absence of its master might involve its total loss. That master, meanwhile, was working for another, but at his own charges. Worse off even than a slave, he received not only no wages, but no food, from his employer. In the fact that the beggars in France were computed at a million and a half, we may see the practical working of the system, though in a part only of its effects. In the legal maxim 'le peuple est taillable et corvéable à merci,' or in the objection of the Prince de Conti to the abolition of involuntary labour, 'parce que ce serait effacer sur le front de la plèbe la tache originelle de sa servitude,' we may learn the spirit in which that system was administered.

Such, then, was the condition to which the many had been brought, and such the disdain with which their superiors regarded them. If we look next at the condition of the few, favoured by birth or fortune, the contrast seems only to deepen and render more intense the reality of degraded misery which had become the rule rather than the exception among Frenchmen of the lower classes. Never before had the French Court been more splendid. Never before had the art and labour and ingenuity of the world been made so subject to the gratification of the tastes and passions, and even the whims, of the small minority for whose exclusive benefit the nation existed and suffered. There was no Church now to stand between the weak and his oppressor; and to teach the rich and powerful that their rights were to be regarded

less than their duties, and that for all the talents with which they had been entrusted they would be called strictly to account. Such a voice had the Church once raised, and often not in vain, but its attitude had become more respectful ; its tones more honeyed ; its doctrine better accommodated to its own changed position. It had once taught with authority ; but it must now request where it had commanded, and fall in as it could with the customs and wishes of a State which had become its master. To the rich and noble the change may have been agreeable enough. It left him free to follow his own pleasures, and conferred even the sanction of religious approval upon vices which religion had become quite powerless to forbid. But to the poor man, who lost thereby his best friend and supporter, the change was sad indeed. Feeling keenly the oppression under which he suffered, he found now that he must suffer unaided and unrelieved. The Church, on which he could once have relied for protection, had passed over to his enemies. He was taught indeed the duty of submission, but nothing was done to render a lot tolerable to which no human being could willingly submit. Can we wonder at the retribution which he exacted when the hour of his deliverance had at length sounded ; when his fetters had been broken, and his hand was free to strike ? When we read with pity of the victims of the great Revolution, of noble houses robbed of their wealth, forced into exile, or thinned by the axe of the guillotine, our pity indeed is not misplaced. The revenge that was taken was fierce, the reverse of fortune terrible ; but we should set in the opposite scale, the long unpitied wrongs of the poor and lowly, the less obtrusive and less romantic miseries of the artisan and the labourer. If any consideration for the greatest happiness of the greatest number is to influence our views of right, we may well hesitate to

condemn a movement which struck at the few, and brought salvation to the many, which relieved the oppressed, though it was at the price of the ruin of his oppressor.

But it was not only the social wrongs and sufferings of the poor that had made a revolution inevitable. The tide of speculation had set strongly against the existing order in Church and State. Most prominent among those who contributed to weaken the 'principle of authority' must be ranked Voltaire and Rousseau. Their influence may be measured most properly by the effect which their lives and writings had produced in Paris. Acting immediately upon the centre of French thought and action, and spreading widely among the people a disbelief, and a distrust in the old system, their doctrine fell upon a soil already fitted to receive it, and seemed to bring about results of which it was the occasion rather than the cause. Inferior as they were, beyond all question, to the school of Diderot and D'Alembert, the true representatives of the thought of the eighteenth century, their influence was yet greater, if we measure it by its immediate and tangible results. Alike animated by a burning hatred of injustice, each, as he believed, had vowed his life to the service of his fellow-men. But the kind of service which they rendered was very different. Voltaire's attacks were directed mainly against the Church: he did not assail the fundamental order of society, but contented himself with exposing in detail the wrongs of individuals and the oppressive tyranny of the great. Maintaining still a belief in God, partly as a deduction of his reason, partly as an apparent social necessity; willing to uphold provisionally the existing social order purged of its worst abuses; and aiming rather at the end he had in view, than careful about the consistency of the means by which he reached it—Voltaire, in spite of his

many faults and errors, has earned our gratitude as men, for the spirit in which he wrought, more even than for the work which he accomplished, and for what he was willing to support rather than for that which he was most successful in destroying.

The aim of Rousseau was wider and more ambitious. The god in which he believed was the creation of his heart, rather than of his understanding—a being of pure benevolence, whose function it was to protect the weak and relieve the wretched—a necessary counterpoise to the existing evils of society. Those evils he regarded, not as inherent in the nature of things, but as consequences of the unjust and artificial rules by which men had agreed in regulating their social intercourse. The proper cure for them, therefore, was to be found in discrediting those rules, and returning to a state of nature. He was not of a temper to be dismayed at any consequences to which his theories necessarily led him. He was not conscious of any absurdity in declaring his deliberate preference for the life and habits of the savage. Civilization had been a downward course. Our examples, therefore, must be chosen from the distant past, the conception of which was gained, however, from imagination rather than from history; and was little else, when we had got it, than an aggregation of merely negative qualities.

But we must not measure the effect of Rousseau's doctrines by any consideration of their value as a speculative system. When he spoke of the sufferings of mankind as soon now to be redressed, and of the conscious brotherhood of the human family as a conception soon to be realized, he spoke to men smarting under a sense of wrong, and ready to welcome any means which promised them an effectual deliverance. In the words of M. Louis Blanc, 'Il devait être le précurseur du socialisme moderne : ce fut son malheur et sa gloire.' We shall find

the chief actors in the coming revolution divided as followers of one or the other of these two philosophers.

The period which M. Louis Blanc has treated in full detail, commences with the events immediately preceding the Convocation of the States-General, and comprising about seven years, extending as it does down to the close of the memorable Convention. It will, of course, be impossible for us to attempt to follow him in detail in his treatment of this period. He has made no secret, throughout, of his own political views; and these have necessarily and fairly modified his judgement as an historian. He has little sympathy for the *bourgeoisie*, less still for the Court and nobles. Their point of view was too narrow—in plain English, too selfish. He is content with nothing less than a wide and all-embracing fraternity. There are, he tells us, three principles possible;—the principle of authority, which is out of place when the Government and Church have ceased to command man's reverence;—the principle of individualism, showing itself in the *laissez-faire* of modern politics; in the right of private judgement of modern religion; and, generally, in the disorganization and selfishness of modern society;—and lastly, there is fraternity, the conception of the past, the hope of the nobler future; a principle which is to destroy vice by striking at its root—selfishness; and by which the happiness of all is to be the great aim and motive of each; and society is to expand itself into new forms of beauty and virtue, because such results must, of necessity, follow, when men have laid aside the private aims, and have emancipated themselves from the narrow motives, which have troubled and debased the past, and have become contented to submit themselves freely to the perfect liberty of love. There are countries still in which the principle of authority is supreme, and wellnigh unquestioned. There are countries in which, as in our own,

a full scope is given, avowedly, to the principle of individualism, with what results we need not here inquire. But it has been in France, and in France only, that the principle of fraternity has been believed and taught as the purest and noblest rule of human conduct; and it is inasmuch only as they have expressed and developed this principle, that the French Revolution and its heroes must stand ennobled for ever in the grateful memory of the future. To have taught this, to have worked for this, to have lived and died to promote it, is the one great claim by which that age and those men have earned for themselves a glory which no time can extinguish. Their faults and failings are forgotten or forgiven; the accidents of success or misfortune are as nothing, when we remember the end they wrought for. They have passed away, it is true; their ideas are unrealized; their purposes unfulfilled: but it is by these ideas and these purposes that we must judge them. Their lives and teaching and experience may have been indispensable for our guidance. They have not themselves succeeded, but it may yet be that their failure has made success possible for others.

Such are the several conceptions according to which M. Louis Blanc has interpreted and judged the phases of the French Revolution. In order to judge it fairly, he has been compelled, he tells us, to rid himself of the bias of his own early education, and to forget even the cause of his own family in the greater cause of his country. His relations were Royalists. Horror for the Revolution was his first strong emotion. His grandfather's death by the guillotine; his father's imprisonment and successful escape from prison, which alone saved him from sharing the same death; these were his first associations with the hateful name Revolution. His own convictions and prejudices were not easy to overcome. It is no light matter to shake away the deep faith of our early years; no ready



task to approve as citizens what we have reason to hate as men. But if his mature reason has led him to correct the error of his first impression, and to do justice to the acts and men which he had once regarded with detestation, he has never suffered himself so to forget the eternal law of right as to gloss over and excuse the cruelties by which the Revolution was accompanied, and by which, too, its tide of success was checked, and a stain fixed indelibly upon its name and memory. It has been easy for him to hate those crimes, for those whom he loved best were among the sufferers; but he has been careful not to allow his hatred to exceed due bounds, or to render him blind to the real merits of those whom he is compelled partially to condemn. Let us see his judgment of the principal events of that eventful period.

The first decisive scene in the great drama was the meeting of the States-General and the formation of the National Assembly. The benefits which this body conferred were, however, chiefly negative. They abolished the worst evils under which the people had suffered, and swept away by a series of legislative enactments the most oppressive remains of the old feudal *régime*. The nobles were defeated; the triumph belonged to the *bourgeoisie*, in whose favour the principal changes were brought about. The result was the more praiseworthy as the men who contributed to effect it were many of them themselves losers by the change. But they were ready in the enthusiasm of the moment to consent to any sacrifices, and could even vie with one another in the greatness of the offerings they presented to their country.

But the bulk of the people were not yet satisfied. The triumph of the middle-classes they could not share. The poverty and distress they endured could never be removed by such legislation as had as yet been tried. They cared little about the name of liberty, where they could possess

only its shadow. *Laissez-faire* was for them equivalent to *laissez-mourir*. The first step into revolution had been taken, and it was now impossible to draw back. There were many who supposed that the goal had been attained already. They were satisfied with what had been done, and they desired nothing further. But there were some in the Assembly itself, and a countless multitude beyond it, who were not so easily to be contented; and their demands were too fiercely urged to allow of their remaining unlistened to. Their time had not yet arrived, but they were conscious of their power, and had full faith in the justice of their cause. They were prepared to insist upon something more than the mere change to a constitutional monarchy, as the result of the Revolution; and when the hour arrived for action they were not slow to avail themselves of it. The *bourgeoisie* were much mistaken if they regarded the victory as already their own.

The next body of representatives, the National Legislative Assembly, are less famous in history than the Chambers which preceded and followed them. Their term of office, lasting barely for a year, was conspicuous chiefly for the vigour of its foreign policy. At home the Revolution had advanced with rapid strides. The king, who had appeared ready to lead it, as far at least as a constitutional monarch could go with safety, and who had even consented to a war against the German Powers, who were threatening the French frontiers, and insisting upon impossible modifications of the new order in France, found himself soon unable to command his subjects' confidence. The enemies of France were professedly at war with her in his interest; their armies were joined by the numerous bodies of refugees who were avowedly most hostile to the recent changes; and, at the first serious reverses which the French arms sustained, the king was accused as the real cause of the misfortunes;

the populace of Paris, impatient and suspicious, became more and more estranged from the cause and person of their monarch. The danger from without became more threatening, and the parties at home correspondingly more violent. The names, so famous afterwards, were already prominent. The leaders of the Gironde on the one side composed the most revolutionary portion of the then elected Assembly; but the real masters of the situation were the clubs and the multitude without, under the guidance of Marat, Danton, Collot d'Herbois, Santerre, Camille Desmoulins, and, better known than any, of Robespierre. Under their influence the prisons were filled with the suspected; the king's office was suspended by the Assembly, and the king himself confined in the Temple; and, when the astounding news reached the capital that Verdun had fallen, and that the allied armies were in full march on Paris, the occasion was taken to perpetrate the first great massacre that disgraced the cause for which it was done. The suspected priests and nobles were tried with a mockery of judicial forms, and executed in prison by a band of three hundred murderers. The character of the Revolution was by this time sufficiently marked. Its direction was in the hands of the people of Paris, in spite of the subsequent opposition of those parts of France which were attached to the former order. The close of the campaign was favourable to the French arms. Valmy, a slight and unimportant success in itself, a cannonade rather than a battle, served to restore the confidence of the soldiers. The season ended with the retreat of the Allies, and the Revolution was free henceforward to pursue its own course: the dread of foreign intervention was over.

The third body of representatives, the ever-memorable Convention, had met on September 21, 1792. The Girondists, who had formed the *côté gauche* of the previous

Assembly, were now on the *côté droit*. Their former place was occupied by the Montagnards, and their leaders, the deputies of Paris, who were to contend for what was now most dear to the hearts of Frenchmen—for that common brotherhood of mankind which appeared no longer as a crotchet of philosophers, or a dream of poets; but as an object, the attainment of which was within the grasp of the immediate future, and for which the advanced guard of the nation were prepared to live, and, if necessary, to die. It was not long before the hostility of these two parties began to display itself in action, but neither had as yet succeeded in overpowering the resistance of the other, when, on January 16, 1793, the question was finally brought forward of the fate of the captive king. The details of the proceedings, which M. Louis Blanc has supplied from various contemporary sources, are of the highest interest. The matter, he tells us, was decided by a very full Assembly. Of the entire body of representatives, fifteen were absent on public business, seven were ill, and one was dead. The remainder, seven hundred and twenty-six in number, were present, and only five of them abstained from voting. The rest, one by one, ascended the tribunal, and gave their voice, not on the king's guilt or innocence—he had already been pronounced guilty; not on the appeal to the people—that had already been refused—but on the measure only of his punishment. The night of the 16th passed before the votes had been pronounced; the morning sun rose and set again, and the king's fate was yet undetermined. The sentences of each of the deputies have been preserved in the *Moniteur* of the day. The first summoned were from the Haut-Garonne. The first vote given was that of Jean Mailhe. Amid the breathless silence of the Assembly, he pronounced the words *La Mort*. Fourteen votes had been given for death, seven only for imprison-

ment, when the great leader of the Girondists, Vergniaud, was called forth in his turn, and pronounced for death. Some of his party voted with him, but the majority were for the milder sentence. Robespierre declared that for oppressors alone he could know no mercy, and that the same sentiment which had led him to demand from the former Assembly the abolition of capital punishment, forced him now to demand that that punishment should be inflicted on the tyrant of his country, and, in his person, on royalty itself. 'I vote,' said he, 'for death.' Danton said, that with tyrants no terms were possible; the blow must be struck at their heads. He too voted for death. Chaillon was for imprisonment. If the king were executed, Rome would add him to her Calendar of Saints. Gentil voted on the same side. He feared, he said, the reign of another Cromwell, and the restoration of another Charles. Paganel was for death. To become subjects for execution was the chief use which he could see in kings. Milhau pronounced in general against the punishment of death, as a stain on a nation's code; but added, that if it did not exist already, it would be right to invent it for a tyrant. When the votes were added up, it was found that a majority of fifty-three had pronounced for the king's death.

The result of the scrutiny was proclaimed by the President, Vergniaud. 'I declare,' he said, 'in the name of the National Convention, that death is the penalty which it pronounces against Louis Capet.'

This done, the king's defenders were introduced, and allowed to speak against the sentence. The House rose at length, after sitting for thirty-seven hours. On the evening of the 19th it sat again, and the final vote was given. It was then decided by a majority of 380 against 310, that the king should be executed within four-and-twenty hours.

It was on the morning of the 21st that the sentence was carried out. It would appear that the king had retained some hope almost up to the last moment. It was not until he found himself upon the scaffold, surrounded by his executioners, and had in vain attempted to address the crowds about him—for the sound of his voice was overpowered by the soldiers' drums—that he saw at last that the hour could be deferred no longer, and that, guilty or innocent, he must die under sentence as a traitor. His death was, beyond all doubt, the act of the French nation. Each vote that condemned him had been received with the approbation of the spectators who had crowded the Hall of the Convention, and even the spectacle of his execution did nothing to change the popular feeling. The scenes that followed it were brutal; we need not repeat them, but they served at least to manifest the fierce resentment that called them forth. The example of England had been present throughout to those who had condemned him; but there was this great difference between the circumstances of the death of Charles the First and of Louis Capet—that in the former case the people had beheld unwillingly, and with horror, the infliction of a sentence which they had had no share in passing; in the latter, the voice of the country, which had been raised loudly to condemn its king, did not shrink from applauding the present sight of his execution. It had been prophesied that the blood of Louis would be upon their heads, and they pressed about the scaffold, eager that the horrid prediction should be literally fulfilled. They were told that they would be represented to the world as a people savage, and athirst for blood. 'Yes,' was the answer; 'we *do* thirst for the blood of a despot. Let him who will, go and inform the whole earth of it.' The gaiety of the great capital was not interrupted for a moment; it seemed, indeed, as if the inhabitants were

keeping some especial holiday. We may mention two things as characteristic of the men and times. No cannon were fired, to signify the moment of the execution, for 'a king's head should make no more noise when it falls than that of another man.' The remains were placed in a wicker basket, and buried with quicklime, in the cemetery of the Madeleine, 'that all the gold of the potentates of Europe might be offered in vain as the price of the slightest relic.'

'How difficult is it,' says M. Louis Blanc, 'for the present not to be unjust when it judges the actions of the past.' It is easy for us now to make allowances for the faults of which Louis XVI was guilty; it is easy for us to see that they followed naturally from his birth and circumstances and education. His fate raises our pity; we feel something of indignation against the authors of it; we are only too likely to forget that for them, too, we must make allowances, if we wish to judge them fairly. They cannot but have felt that they lived in no ordinary times; and were engaged, for life or for death, in no ordinary contest. Let us picture to ourselves the forces against which they had to struggle. There was no hesitation on the other side; no attempt or desire to carry matters by half-measures. The old had armed itself against the new. The manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick had been put forth; the French soil had been invaded; all along the frontiers were the emigrants, banded with their country's foes, eager to return and take vengeance for the injuries of their order. To us it may sound ridiculous to call Louis XVI a tyrant; but we should remember not only what he was, but what he had consented to be the representative of. The old order was to pass away; it was condemned already by the hatred of the country that had suffered from it too deeply and too long. It was the misfortune of the king, but it was his fault too, that he

seemed to stand forth as the impersonation of the hated system. His private virtues had not availed to prevent him from being his country's worst enemy; they should not now be pleaded to mislead our sympathies about the death to which his antecedents, not unnaturally, conducted him. He was deservedly held responsible for the evil deeds of the nobles, and for the unaided sufferings of the poor. He had protected the clergy—he must be the victim therefore of the changes which had cast them down. He must suffer as a traitor, for it was in his name that the enemies of France had unfurled their standards and drawn their swords against her. He may well have seemed to his indignant subjects as the cause, more than any other man, of all that had been most hateful in the past—as allied with all that threatened most danger to the future. His execution may well have seemed to confirm most solemnly the new league of brotherhood, and to declare most plainly to the world, that no terms between the old and new were henceforward possible. It is easy for us to think of him only as an amiable fool, placed in a false position, which he had not had the good sense to abdicate; but the men of his own time must have been more than human in their wise temperance, if they could so easily have excused one who must have been to them the representative of the men and the system against which they had been forced to arms; which they were now either to fall before and be slaves, or to triumph over and be free for ever. To inflict the penalty of death was an error, no doubt, but we dare not call it a crime. The Republic was strong enough to venture to show mercy: it might have left Louis XVI with his life, after proving that he had deserved to forfeit it; and it has paid the penalty of such an error in the horror and indignation that the deed aroused in Europe, and in the infamy that has attached to the Assembly that decreed the sentence, and



to the people that were consenting to it. The cause of monarchy was strengthened, and not weakened, by the French king's death. It is not true to repeat with Barrère, '*Il n'y a que les morts qui ne reviennent pas.*' No, we must say rather, '*Il n'y a que les morts qui reviennent.*'

We have no space to add in detail the judgement which M. Louis Blanc passes upon the great events which so soon followed. The two leading parties of the Convention, the Montagnards and Girondins, were followers, the former of Rousseau's doctrine, the latter of Voltaire's; and there was a third party, best represented in Danton, which belonged to neither, and included in its ranks all that was wisest and noblest among the representatives. It was the period during which these men were in power that forms, in truth, the most brilliant epoch of all French history. Under their presidency the nation adopted a provisional form of Government, centralized, as the traditions of the past demanded, and displaying the military zeal and energy which the occasion called for. The fall of these men ushered in the fatal triumph of fanatical folly which has, however unjustly, done so much to discredit the Revolution and its heroes, and which appeared at the time so nearly to endanger its ultimate success. Of the long years that followed, during which the power of France, exerted mainly to achieve military glory, was directed by so successful an ambition, that its triumphs eclipsed the fabled exploits of the heroes of old romance, until the world seemed prostrate at the feet of her Emperor; and of the change of fortune which brought about so speedy and so irrecoverable a ruin; of these it does not fall within our present purpose to speak. We need only remark that this vast misdirection of her national resources, this degradation of a whole people by the pursuit of an unworthy end, admits of the same excuse as the earlier excesses which have stained her revolutionary

career. Both alike resulted, naturally, from the position in which her enemies had placed her. Men are never more cruel than when their fears are thoroughly aroused. It had become necessary to make the enemies of the Revolution tremble; and it is indeed a rare thing for a multitude which has once begun to shed blood, to cease as soon as the necessity has passed. The attacks on the frontiers had transformed every Frenchman into a soldier; and, having so unfitted him for the peaceful duties of civil life, had left him only a military career to follow, a military ambition to gratify. The evil deeds of both periods must be charged, not only on those who committed them, but on those who first provoked them. 'Men's thoughts are much according to their inclination; their discourse and speeches according to their learning and infused opinions; but their deeds are after as they have been accustomed.'

M. Louis Blanc does not carry his history down beyond the last days of the Convention. The judgement he passes upon that assembly is more favourable than most Englishmen would be prepared to receive as true. He admits indeed that its office was merely provisional, but such is the necessary fate of all human institutions. He praises it therefore for the principles it recognized, and for the general tendency of its decrees and acts. It endeavoured, in a word, to render individual rights subordinate to social duties; it held that it was the office of the State, not only to protect its members, but to watch over them, and develop their faculties to the uttermost. It knew no distinction of high and low, of rich and poor; all were equally the objects of its care and forethought. The present generation may revile its memory; but they have none the less profited by its labours. French civilization has followed, on the whole, the course which was then marked out for it. Frenchmen have been taught to disregard the

distinctions of birth and fortune. They have established, or nearly so, a real social equality, under the protecting care of a centralized and paternal Government. Their ideal is not the same as ours. We need not compare the merits of each, or venture to pronounce between them. The comparison is rather between France herself, before and after the period of her great Revolution ; between the ancient system of organized oppression, which existed for the benefit of the few and for the real misery of the multitude ; and a system which has flung down the old feudal barriers, and redressed, with no hesitating hand, the wrongs of centuries. England has chosen liberty ; France has preferred equality ; and either system might very well be intolerable to those who have grown up under the contrary one. At least, we must thank M. Louis Blanc for the zeal and courage he has displayed in putting forward the favourable side of an Assembly and of a period which have hitherto been too unreservedly condemned. The facts he has collected will always be of the deepest interest. His verdict, though sometimes that of a partisan, is always that of a man of learning and honesty. As each year in its course develops more and more the immense resources and the immense influence of his native country, the more necessary does it become for Englishmen to form, as they have not done hitherto, a fair judgement of the Revolution he has undertaken to describe.

It is not easy to gather, from M. Louis Blanc's treatment of the period, the precise causes which he assigns for the fact that the Revolution, after all, was not permanently successful ; that the principles which it represented have seemed rather to lose than gain ground since their public and authoritative exposition. Something must, of course, be assigned to the clearer vision which the Retrograde party throughout Europe have attained as to the real tendency of each Popular movement. If

the friends of mankind have gained in wisdom and in breadth of experience, so too have their enemies. They have learned, at least, that their position is uncertain, and that the events of an hour may fling them down. Their dangerous eminence is not to be retained without effort and without sacrifice. They must not again be caught sleeping at their post; and, to do them justice, they are not likely to be. They have displayed no lack of energy, no unwillingness to do all that they can to hold the prizes which the order of events has tossed into their hands.

But this is, of course, a reason, not indeed without its force, but quite insufficient to account for the delay which has attended the working-out in action of the opposite programme; and in France herself it has had less weight than in other parts of Europe. The French people have more than once had the reality of power within their grasp, and more than once have failed to grasp it. We see that some other and deeper causes must have been at work than the very superficial one of mere material repression. There must have been some weakness, some fault among themselves, which has served to postpone their triumph. Again and again has the same scene been repeated. Institutions that have been abolished have risen up once more; beliefs that have been rejected have again prevailed; habits that have been abandoned have asserted their old power. The will of the Past has proved too strong for the spirit of Revolution. The same order seems ever to recur; the same great outbursts of popular vigour to be still followed by the same reaction. As it was in the first Revolution, so has it been, too, in our own days, and within our own memory. The ideas of the past bear, as it were, a charmed life: the power that is to slay them finally has not yet been put forth.

These are thoughts which force us to consider in what the revolutionary leaders of the past have been deficient

and what peculiar strength their opponents have possessed. The first requisite to enable any one to modify the existing order of things in politics must surely be a precise and available knowledge of the subject with which he has to deal; he must possess a rational theory of the past, and must deal with the present by the aid of such a theory. Generous instincts, self-devotion, courage, the willingness even to die for a good cause, must here be wholly unavailing. Knowledge is the first thing needful; not the only thing. The mere 'dry light' of speculative science needs some higher stimulus to quicken it. But we may say, safely, that the politician who relies only upon his wish to do good, and neglects to inquire into the conditions and laws of the subject with which he undertakes to deal, is no more likely to succeed in his wild enterprise than the physician who attempts to cure disease by the aid only of uninstructed benevolence, or (to take a humbler instance), than the *cuisinier*, whose only art is the wish to gratify his master's palate.

It is scarcely unjust to say that the leaders of the Convention were not fitted for the task they attempted by any better qualifications than the above. We must make a special exception in favour of the period during which Danton's influence was predominant. The Assembly was then contented to provide chiefly for the necessities of a defensive war, and to institute a form of Government which was felt, even by its supporters, to be nothing more than provisional. It is greatly to their honour that they were contented with this humbler aim, and were not led on to attempt a work for which they were as yet unqualified, and which could therefore result only in a shameful and pernicious failure. And such, in truth, was its result in the hands of others. The partisans of the Gironde and of the Montagne were alike deficient in the essential qualities of statesmen. The former, advocates as they

were of civil and religious freedom, and possessing among them men gifted with the highest powers of eloquence, and with almost every talent except the one they needed, had no system that deserved the name, no programme which they could have carried out, even if the supreme power had fallen into their hands. The Montagnists, unfortunately for their own reputation, and still more unfortunately for the cause they wished to serve, were enabled, by the full possession of power, to show to the world their fitness or unfitness to govern. The result is known only too well. Their absurdities and cruelties have thrown discredit not only on their party but on their cause. There are two things, especially, which have thenceforth been associated in men's minds with the triumph of a revolution in France;—a burlesque alike of religion and of justice—the worship of the goddess of Reason and 'the Reign of Terror.'

It is quite evident that M. Louis Blanc's sympathies are, on the whole, in favour of the Montagnists. He palliates their excesses, but it is only doing him justice to add that he does not defend their crimes. The *culte du sentiment de fraternité* which they sought contrasts favourably in his eyes with the *Rationalisme et Individualisme* of the Girondists. Robespierre, the most honest, the most uncompromising, and the most mischievous of them all, stands out on his pages in the proportions of a moral hero. We forget his acts, and learn only to admire his intentions. His love for God and for man was alike pure and unselfish; and yet few have done more to discredit the one and destroy the happiness of the other. That his career was something worse than a failure is but too evident. M. Blanc is as far as any one could be from denying it; and yet he deals with him throughout with a tenderness which we can scarcely understand; and quotes his most foolish and fanatical speeches and projects as though they

were masterpieces of political and moral wisdom. If we ask the question, how it happened that Robespierre and his fellows, starting with the best intentions, animated by the most earnest benevolence, and ready to act with the promptness and energy which a cause like theirs demands, yet succeeded only in inaugurating a system which will be remembered for ever as a most senseless and horrible parody of Republican government, a commonwealth in which every man's hand was against his neighbour, and in which suspicion and fear augmented a hundredfold the sufferings of the period;—if we ask how it could have been that such antecedents were followed by such results, and why in this case wisdom and goodness combined failed so strangely to produce their natural and necessary fruits, we shall meet no satisfactory answer, scarcely indeed any answer at all. Allowing most fully for the difficulties of the situation, for the dangers from within and from without with which the Republican France of those days was threatened by her avowed enemies, we shall yet find them insufficient to explain the problem before us. We must ask rather in what qualities the leaders of the time were most peculiarly deficient, and whether they were of importance enough to ensure their failure.

We have said that the two leading parties of the Convention were followers respectively of Voltaire and Rousseau. Now, as Rousseau's followers, the Montagnards, eventually gained the day, it is of interest to ask what was the nature of the principles which then triumphed. The political philosophy of the Montagnards was the simplest conceivable. The sum of all their wisdom is to be found in the *Contrat Social*. A few vague generalities about the equality and brotherhood of mankind; a theory (for it was little more) that most crimes ought to be avoided, and a man's finer feelings

excited and cultivated to the suppression of his lower nature ; these, with the added notion that one's neighbour's conduct was the first thing to be looked after, and next to that one's own, formed the staple of their speculative views. It was not to be expected that much uniformity of aim or doctrine could be attained from such premises ; and its absence became the more dangerous, since, along with the necessity which was felt for a change of some kind to fit the new requirements of the age, it was assumed that society would be a mere passive instrument in the hands of those who were to re-fashion it, and that the past might be safely put aside, inasmuch as the course of history recorded little but the perverse aberrations of mankind from their original state of equality and brotherhood. Not only, therefore, were the leaders of that age totally ignorant of the very rudiments of social science, but they were ready with a theory of their own, which they were prepared to enforce, if necessary, by any method that seemed likely to secure agreement,—a theory so wild and impracticable that its application would have been sufficient to destroy society altogether, if it had not been that the despised past was too strong to be so easily uprooted, and the effort too absurd to be proceeded with, after an experience of its failure, and of the consequences which that failure only too speedily entailed. Then, as ever, it was proved true that one must supplant in order effectually to destroy ; and that, in social as in every other science, those only can control nature who have learned to work with her, and to obey her necessary laws.

It appears to us the great defect of M. Louis Blanc's admirable history, that he never points out precisely the reasons of the failure he so touchingly deplores. We are quite ready to admit that his favourite heroes acted, in the main, from the purest and most unselfish motives, that their first desire was to benefit their native country and



their fellow-men. The fact remains unaltered, that they were the sources to both of the greatest possible misery. We have no right to condemn them morally any more than we should have to condemn a sentimental lunatic, whose fancy led him to run amuck at mankind in periodically recurring fits of spasmodic benevolence; but we should not, therefore, feel it the less necessary, in either case, to deprive a madman of the means of doing further mischief.

It is impossible to read carefully the history of the Convention without seeing how entirely its character was determined by the pressure from without; how entirely it was the mob of Paris that, in fact, guided its policy. There was then the grandest opportunity that, perhaps, the world has ever seen for the pre-eminence of an individual hero. It was within the power of Danton to seize a position such as Caesar and Cromwell had once seized, and to direct his country's councils with the authority, if not with the name, of Emperor. But this he failed to do. It may have been from mere inaction, or from an excusable shrinking from a risk and responsibility that might well have alarmed the boldest. Anyhow, he suffered the great occasion to go by, and gave place to Robespierre and his fanatical crew, to be succeeded in due time by Napoleon Bonaparte. That he expiated his negligence with his own life was, perhaps, his least punishment. He lived long enough to see and to deplore the miseries which a greater courage and a greater firmness on his part might have averted; and to know that a cause for which he would willingly have died was already ruined. We would not judge him too harshly, as one 'who made through cowardice the great refusal'; we will only say that now, through two generations, the Republic of the West has paid the penalty of his omission to assert his right to govern. It is seldom

enough that an individual, however powerful he may appear, has much real influence for good or evil. In the long chapter of accidents, virtues and vices pretty nearly counterbalance one another, and the course of history evolves itself without much regard to them. But there are some crises at which the conduct of a single man becomes of quite infinite importance. The ultimate goal, indeed, to which we are tending may be unchanged, whatever happens to us on the way; but the happiness of millions may depend on whether that way can be made shorter and more direct, and its rough places smoothed by the wise intervention of a real human providence. We are as far as any from adopting what has been happily termed 'the backstairs view of history.' We do not wish to exaggerate unduly the consequences of single acts, or to regard the intrigues of statesmen and mistresses as of any real importance, or indeed as worth telling at all; but we must remember that, in the last analysis, it is from the thoughts and actions of individuals that the order of events must spring, and that Nature is not wont to be lavish in the number of those whom she qualifies to guide a crisis.

It would be impossible to praise too highly the charm of style and manner which distinguishes M. Louis Blanc's *History of the French Revolution*. The events of each year are told with a fullness of detail which leaves little more to be desired; and, although the personal bias of the author can be seen very clearly throughout, there can be seen, too, an evident wish to do justice to all alike, whether friends or enemies. A history written without a bias must be written without a theory. Right and wrong can never be objects of indifference to an historian who is qualified to write at all; and whether we accept the clue offered us or not, we feel that the work is the more valuable for proposing one. There is no reading

more truly unprofitable than a series of unexplained facts, passing before us in succession, as little connected with each other as the dissolving views of the kaleidoscope, and fading away from the mind as quickly and as certainly as the gossip of everyday conversation, and with no better result for the pains which their acquisition may have cost us. A theory of history must sink almost to the level of Dr. Cumming's explanation of the past and present and future by the aid of the prophetic writings of the Old and New Testaments, before we can say seriously that the facts would have been better told without it. History has not yet been embraced, fully, within the circle of the exact sciences, and our efforts in many directions must long continue to be tentative.

Least of all could the French Revolution be described fittingly without some higher guidance than a mere knowledge of the succession of its strange phenomena. The one point, which more than any other marked it, was the prevalence—the predominance—as M. Louis Blanc terms it, 'the fanaticism of ideas.' The leaders of the multitude were forced on by an enthusiasm stronger and more violent than the most energetic of the ordinary passions of men. The intoxication of glory, the madness of conquest, the distraction of love, have been less potent than the devotion then inspired by a few abstract formulae.

And it was not only the leaders, but the multitude itself that felt the impulse of this strange enthusiasm. Napoleon could never pardon the *idéologues* the real power they had possessed—a power greater and more complete than the genius of Caesar himself could have dared to grasp at.

It is a mournful thought that all this enthusiasm was spent in vain; that the purpose for which the struggle was carried through is not yet fulfilled. The attempt at fraternity has failed; and what recompense are we to consider as attaching to its authors? The experience

they have gained has become the inheritance of others. Their sufferings have been their own. Are the creatures of yesterday to have lived only for the benefit of the present? Is the present itself to be sacrificed in its turn to the necessities of the future? Must not progress itself appear a hateful thing to the wretches whom it dooms to suffer? Were it not better for them never to have heard the name of freedom, and never to have fought for the blessings that the future seemed to promise, if they can suffer only for the prospective good of others, and never themselves enjoy the satisfaction of a noble purpose nobly fulfilled, but must pass away before the triumph has been won,—after, it may be, a long life of self-denial and heroism, earning nothing for themselves but the pain and wounds of the battle, and unrewarded by the crown of victory?

These questions, and such as these, would be terrible, says M. Louis Blanc, if we did not believe in the solidarity of races, and in the immortality of the human species. *L'humanité est un homme qui vit toujours et qui apprend sans cesse.* We must learn to identify ourselves with the future, and merge our individual in our social existence, if we are to act worthily here, and with whatever further result to ourselves, at least to fulfil the promptings of our noblest instincts. And that they did really act and suffer in this spirit is the chief claim of the leaders of the Convention to our respect and gratitude. We may allow all that their enemies have urged against them. We may grant that some of them were mistaken alike in the objects they sought and in the means which they employed to compass them. But if they wrought only in the spirit of genuine self-sacrifice; if they were willing to toil in order that others might enter in and reap the fruits of their labours; if their love for man extended beyond the narrow limits of time and place, and embraced other

lands and other ages than their own,—we may not then refuse them an honour greater far than mere success could have deserved. *Que mon nom soit flétri, que la France soit libre*, is indeed conceived in the ‘grand style’ of heroism. It is more than a modern counterpart to the *non sibi sed toti genitum se credere mundo* of the Roman poet. It rises to the impassioned earnestness of Saint Paul, who was willing even to become Anathema for his brethren. If that thought were all that remained to us from the Revolution, the great drama would not have been commenced in vain.

## IV.

### THE CRITICAL CHARACTER<sup>1</sup>.

'LA CRITIQUE,' says M. Renan (the phrase is one for which we have no precise English equivalent), 'has been the growth of the present century;' and, if we accept the term in its widest sense, the remark is no doubt true. We must understand it, then, as the art or science which judges not only of aesthetics, but of the entire range of literature; and brings to its task a temper or habit of mind which is wellnigh peculiar to our own age and circumstances. The growth and development of this habit is certainly one of the most remarkable 'signs of the times.' We must admit, it is true, that to create is in itself a work higher and nobler than passing judgement upon the creations of others; but this is only so if we suppose both powers to exist in a somewhat equal degree of excellence. When our choice lies between third-rate creation and first-rate criticism, we must be excused if we prefer the latter.

In speaking of the present age as pre-eminently the age of criticism, we must be understood as speaking with what must appear to the English reader very considerable

- <sup>1</sup> 1. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, by John Ruskin. London, 1849.
2. *Modern Painters*, by John Ruskin. London, 1846-1861.
3. *Lectures delivered before the University of Oxford*, by M. Arnold, M.A., Professor of Poetry. London.

allowance. England is not the land of criticism. It is not of native growth with us, but has been introduced from without—an exotic, which has taken root indeed among us, but does not yet thrive as in the countries which can most properly claim it as their own. Our faults and virtues as a nation seem, at present, essentially opposed to it. It demands especially perfect freedom of thought, or rather, perhaps, perfect obedience to a law which we have not learned; while our 'intellectual deliverance' is too incomplete for such freedom or such obedience to be possible for us. It demands the truest and widest sympathy with the past, and still more with the present; the wisest foresight of the future; the most certain discrimination between what is real and abiding, and what is provisional, and therefore only transitory. These qualities are the common conditions of all present greatness in thought or action. We cannot do without them, whether it be our mission to create or to destroy. The special taste and knowledge which the critic requires in addition to them may be the possession of the English critic as well as of any other; but if he possess, besides these, those other and higher faculties, he does so not by virtue of his place of birth, but in spite of it—not as an Englishman, but rather as a member of the family of Western Europe.

We have chosen for very different reasons the two writers who form the subject of the present article. Professor Arnold's, because, in spite of some faults, he is the very best critic we possess; Mr. Ruskin's, because, in spite of many great and noble qualities, he is one of the most deficient in the true critical temper. We will proceed now to discuss a little in detail their respective faults and excellences.

Without doubt, Mr. Ruskin is a man of true genius; and the judgement of a man of genius can scarcely fail

to be worth attention. He may write carelessly, recklessly even, and sometimes with a knowledge of his subject so slight as to be hardly distinguishable from total ignorance; but for all this we may learn something from his writings. His random remarks may count for more than the sober sentences of a pedant; his very ignorance may make him discursive; and he will pass on, in happy unconsciousness, from his subject, of which he knows nothing, to another which he knows well, or about which he can feel nobly. The surface may be barren and uninviting, but we may light unawares upon a rich vein of treasure hidden not far below it. He may teach us a moral lesson while he supposes himself lecturing on Political Economy; or fire us with the charms of mountain air and mountain exercise while he intends only to abuse the study of Philology, or, with about as much reason, to assert his own aptitude for Metaphysics. His sympathies and antipathies are often in ludicrous extremes; his whims and fancies are more than feminine in their number and absurdity; but he can write even nonsense well, and the chaff of his greatest nonsense is never quite unmixed with grains of the very finest corn.

It would be scarcely possible to value too highly the services which Mr. Ruskin has rendered in aiding, as he has done, the appreciation in England of the greatest mediaeval artists. Englishmen have, as a rule, little love for the Middle Ages, little sense of their relation to modern life and thought, little knowledge of their infinite grandeur and nobility. At the Protestant Reformation a great gulf was fixed between the past and present; and ever since that date the gulf has been continually widening. We have learned to thank God that we are not as other nations, and to contrast scornfully our own enlightenment, as we are pleased to term



it, with the superstitious reverence of our forefathers. And hence has resulted a general neglect and depreciation of the past, as senseless as it is immoral. Catholic nations have at least this advantage over us—that they have not so entirely cut asunder the links that bind them to those earlier ages, whose thoughts have ceased to be our thoughts, and whose customs and ways of life we have flung from us with self-satisfied contempt. Far be it from us to decry the present, rich as it is with the yet early promise of a nobler future. We know well that the past has gone by for ever; that the spirit of modern thought and the energies of modern life can never be satisfied with the forms and habits which they have consciously and necessarily cast aside. We need not imitate the past; but at least we can do it honour. We can and ought to feel that its life was the necessary precursor of our life: that it has borne our burdens for us; and that that civilization, which we boast so proudly as our own, has been possible only because we have inherited the results of others' labours. We may at least acknowledge with grateful reverence a debt, which is most certainly due, and which we have no other means of paying.

We cannot say that Mr. Ruskin has judged correctly our relation with the Middle Ages. He has not failed indeed to render those ages the honour they have deserved. His fault is rather that he scarcely seems aware of the real greatness of the present. The modern spirit is distasteful to him; he can discern in modern life little else besides its meanness and littleness; and, as for his prevision of the future, he can perceive, he very gravely tells us, signs of the speedy advent of the Son of Man to judgement, and of the destruction by fire of a world which has grown utterly corrupt and worthless. But it is better that he has approached the study of the

past in this spirit than in the spirit of disdain, which is more common and scarcely less irrational. It has enabled him to feel more truly the grandeur of the times which he would fain set before us for our imitation. He is rather perhaps an artist himself than properly a critic; and it has been his endeavour to reproduce the past, and not to judge it. And few men can have loved more truly, or more sincerely honoured those ages in which the grand style in art was yet possible; whose peaceful, contented habits contrast so strangely with the fevered life which beats in our own pulses, and forces us still onwards, from change to change, with no fixed goal and no settled purpose. It has become almost a truism to repeat that this is not the age of poetry—at least, not an age which any poet has as yet adequately expressed. There are times of rest and times of progress; times when the mind of man can repose, satisfied with what it has achieved already, and can rejoice as it gathers in the full sheaves of its harvest. And times, too, when rest and peace appear impossible; when we are aiming at something whose want we dimly feel, and for whose possession we are content to struggle; when the mind of man has grown out of harmony with the customs and circumstances it has inherited, and when the new wine can be contained no longer within the old bottles. We need not wonder, then, that some of the most gifted men among us, whose thoughts are out of harmony with the aims and wishes of the present, should look back with too tender a regret to the fruitful land which we have left behind us, and should proclaim aloud that our wisdom is but folly, and our progress the perversity of error. We can excuse Mr. Ruskin for his sneers at modern life, and his strange anticipations of its nearly approaching future, while we remember only with gratitude the real work which he has done in bringing before

us the nobler features of the noble lives of our ancestors, and in teaching us to love and honour what we have shown ourselves only too ready to forget or to despise. Much may well be forgiven to those who have loved much; and we need not look less proudly at the present or less hopefully to the future when we have been taught at length a better knowledge of the past.

Professor Arnold has dealt with the same subject in a very different spirit. His avowed office is that of a literary critic—an office whose requirements are indeed many, but whose most proper duty appears to be to pass judgement upon the literature of each age, viewed in its relation to its own time and circumstances, and to pronounce accordingly upon its 'adequacy.' There is a vast body of writing too, in almost every age, not adequate indeed, but still with a certain value of its own; expressing something, but not all, of the life which surrounds it, or has preceded it; and here it becomes the critic's duty to discriminate between the better and the worse; to assign each to its own place; and to explain, if need be, its author's position and function.

Mr. Ruskin's aim is at once something more and something less than this. He is critic, poet, philosopher, moralist, and religious teacher. A true prophet, he can foretell and forthtell the decrees of the Divine providence; and where he is beside himself, it is not with much learning, but with the want of it. His intellectual system appears infected throughout with some odd views of the supernatural; not indeed after the manner of Mrs. Browning, with whom the term 'God' is little more than a very strong superlative. He speaks in sober earnest, and with a real sense on each occasion of the personality of his machine Deity. He can denounce sin in the same sentence in which he points out the beauties of a landscape; and can prove the blackness of our hearts by the

smoke and dirt of our manufactories. 'C'est magnifique, sans doute, mais ce n'est pas la guerre.' It is a splendid amusement for the author, but we can hardly term it criticism.

It would be most unjust to Mr. Ruskin to take such specimens as the above as fair examples of his style and manner. They represent a level to which he sinks not unfrequently; but they are not his own proper level. Less than almost any other author can he be judged by his worst passages. It is impossible, indeed, to consider his many and multifarious works as containing a great body of sound criticism. They have too deep an impress throughout of his self-will and eccentricity for us ever to accept his judgements without a degree of hesitation and distrust. He is a thorough partisan; and appears to see no merit in what he dislikes, no faults in what he is pleased to admire. He praises excellence, but we must understand it as excellence in the abstract; we can never feel sure that the particular person or object on which his remarks are made is excellent. So, too, with his blame: we are never certain that the objects to which it is applied deserve it. They do so no doubt if we can only accept his hypothesis. *If* they are as bad as he makes them out, no amount of objurgation is too great for their faults and shortcomings; but it is precisely on this point that he so often fails to satisfy us. We may learn more, perhaps, from his writings than from almost any others in the world; but we must discriminate for ourselves, and not follow blindly where our guide is so exceedingly apt to lead us into error. But the task which he has set himself is one which could only be accomplished by a bold and self-willed man. We need not complain, therefore, of the presence of qualities which have been necessary to ensure success.

Professor Arnold is not less bold or less confident in

his criticisms; but he is confident without being self-willed, and bold without being paradoxical. Never does he fail to bear in mind that golden rule of moderation, the observance of which is not less necessary for the critic than it is for the artist whom he criticizes. Deeply imbued himself with the spirit of modern thought—a true child of the great nineteenth century, he is yet ever anxious not to do less than justice to those who differ from himself so widely as to demand the exercise of the keenest insight and the highest power of sympathy on his part if he is to appreciate them as they deserve indeed to be appreciated. In his later pieces it appears to have been his especial aim to teach us that there is a vast body of modern literature of the highest order about which Englishmen know nothing. If the single names of Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin were the only ones he had revealed to us, we should owe him, even so, no common debt of gratitude. But he has done more than this. He has dared to tell us the unpopular truth that our own literature stands only in the third rank; that our deficiency, as a nation, in the genuine critical spirit has rendered unavailing alike our genius and our industry; and that France and Germany must both be placed above us. To work out steadily the proofs of this assertion; to show the kind of excellence which is possible in the present age; and to show how far we are from having attained to it, and why it is that we have failed, is a task of no little labour, and we may add, of no little odium. How true are Professor Arnold's own words, which he does not indeed apply to himself, but which some of his readers will not fail so to apply. The quality, perhaps rather the sum of qualities, which 'at last inexorably corrects the world's blunders and fixes the world's ideals,' is not one whose possession is likely to make a critic very popular. No. Of 'this quality,' says

the Professor, 'the world is impatient ; it chafes against it, rails at it, insults it, hates it: it ends by receiving its influence, and by undergoing its law.' Posthumous fame may not seem a very cheering reward to look forward to ; but the consciousness of deserving such fame—of toiling at a work, which as far as it is achieved at all, will be enduring—may well support a man when he is misunderstood or misrepresented by his contemporaries. He may despise neglect, and scorn, and hatred ; for he knows that it is none of it deserved, and that it cannot last for ever. There is a reward, even now, not very different from the crown of martyrdom, which may be earned in the world of letters, and amid the bustle of the nineteenth century.

There are several words and phrases, which Professor Arnold has introduced into his criticisms, which are either new, or at least new to the English reader, and the meaning of which it may be worth while for us to endeavour to determine. 'The grand style' we have spoken of already. The phrase has been accepted ; and has won its way to a place in our common vocabularies. There are some others which are yet, as it were, upon their trial ; they express something for which we had no previous name ; but they have not been adopted as 'the grand style' has, and their acceptance is still uncertain. There is one word especially, the need of which perhaps is not much felt, and yet it would seem an immense gain to us if we were at length prevailed upon to adopt it. The term is 'Philistine,' or 'Philistinism,' one of the happiest sobriquets devised by the spirit of modern Germany. 'Philistine,' says Professor Arnold, 'must have originally meant in the mind of those who invented the nickname, a strong, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the chosen people, of the children of the light. The party of change, the would-be remodellers of

the old traditional European order, the invokers of reason against custom, the representatives of the modern spirit in every sphere to which it is applicable, regarded themselves, with the robust self-confidence natural to reformers, as a chosen people, as children of the light. They regarded their adversaries as humdrum people, slaves to routine, enemies to the light; stupid and oppressive, but at the same time very strong. Philistinism—we have not the expression in English. Perhaps we have not the word, because we have so much of the thing. At Soli, I imagine, they did not talk of solecisms; and here, at the very head-quarters of Goliath, nobody talks of Philistinism.' The word is then contrasted with the French *épicier*, and with the use, or rather abuse, by Mr. Carlyle, of the term 'respectable' and 'respectability.' These are rejected, the former because it seems to cast an undeserved sneer upon living men; the latter because it is really a word of value, and means something higher and better than Mr. Carlyle would have us understand by it. If we are to have a word at all for the thing signified (and such a word would be itself a weapon of no little power), we may see reason perhaps to follow the Professor's advice:—'I think we had much better take the term *Philistine* itself.'

There is another word, too, not the watchword of any party, the great value of which is that it indicates a quality whose presence or absence we have either never felt or at least never consciously expressed—a new virtue which we may learn to seek for and to discover in works of the highest artists. We are told of some poets that they have given adequately an expression of their own times, or, in a single word, that they are 'adequate.' Now this is an epithet which is not used to imply that they have set before us in detail a complete picture of the world around them. They may be adequate

without having written a line about the present ; and if so their adequacy must be found in the fact that they have best understood the past in its relations to (then) modern life ; not that they have worked in the spirit either of a Dutch painter or of an antiquarian. Let us see, however, from a few instances, the class of writers to whom the term can be applied. We may begin with three or four names whose claim to rank among the greatest has been established beyond all discussion. Let us take Homer and Pindar ; and, from our own poets, Milton and Shakespeare. Now what have these in common, apart from their greatness as mere artists ? Why should we give them the praise of adequacy and refuse it to Euripides, and Scott, and Wordsworth ? Not merely from a comparison of their excellence as poets, although indeed no one could venture now to place the last three names on the same level as the others. Euripides, and Scott, and Wordsworth, had each of them genius sufficient to have enabled them to write adequately ; the reason that they have not done so must be sought in some other deficiency. Homer and Pindar, and Milton and Shakespeare, all felt and expressed the grandest views that were possible in their own age concerning man and his destiny, concerning his relations to the world about him, and to the unseen world above him. They are therefore adequate ; for they have given us a noble reflexion of the noblest features of their time, and have so given us much that must remain true in all time, however much we may need now to adapt their thoughts, and to translate them as it were into another language. A child indeed among ourselves can correct their more superficial errors : Bishop Colenso can prove to us with an abundance of demonstration that some matters of fact to Milton are not to be deemed historically true ; and we make no question that he might have proved the same about the gods and



goddesses of the Iliad. But this sort of criticism leaves subjects that are worth discussing at all pretty nearly where it finds them. It is enough for us if each poet has worked with the best materials that his age afforded him; or, rather, if the construction is noble, we need not attend much to the form and value of the scaffolding.

Again, we find in Professor Arnold's writings an 'intellectual deliverance' and a 'moral deliverance' spoken of. The terms are new ones, and their meaning is important enough to justify us in dwelling a little upon them. The latter is perhaps the easier, easier, that is, to apprehend, though certainly not the easier to attain. The phrase has apparently been formed by working out an old simile from the figure of speech by which a man's passions and impulses are said to be in subjection to him, or, if the case be so, to be his masters. He is 'delivered' morally as far as he is freed from such mastery, as far as he can regulate his life upon the principle that reason shall govern, and that his lower nature shall submit, and without a murmur. The passions are not to be extinguished: reason might govern then, but it would be in a city of the dead: they are only to be so far restrained that their spontaneous action shall accord with the deliberate moral judgement; so that a man's personal unity shall be complete by the perfect accordance of his impulses with his higher will. This is no other than the old virtue of *σωφροσύνη*. We need the same moral deliverance now that men did two thousand years ago.

The 'intellectual deliverance' is something quite apart from this, not inconsistent with it, but merely distinct from it. 'Modern times,' says Professor Arnold, 'find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this

system their life has to be carried forward, yet they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no means corresponds exactly with the wants of their actual life, that, for them, it is customary, not rational. The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit. To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense.' The intellectual deliverance then is that which fits us, as far as we have any power of working, to become 'dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts'; and which so fits us because those facts have first ceased to satisfy us, because those ideas have first ceased to be our own. Free thought has come so nearly to be another expression for an immoral and flippant atheism, that we gladly welcome a new phrase which will express as great a fullness of liberty, yet without the associations which have made free thought almost necessarily a byword of reproach and censure.

It is a great thing, this intellectual deliverance, even if it imply no more than the above, no more than what we believe Professor Arnold intends to imply by it. The absence of it must certainly injure or destroy the exercise of our active powers. We must work in the modern spirit, if the work that we do is to endure, or to give any lasting satisfaction even to ourselves. And yet we think that a true deliverance should imply something more than this; that, just as a man's moral deliverance does not consist in the mere absence of restraint, so too his intellectual deliverance cannot be perfected merely by his casting away from him the chains of custom and tradition. For any real results we must seek something more than merely negative antecedents. A man may have ceased to be a Philistine, and yet be as little qualified to do any good in his generation as the veriest Philistine of us all.

Truth has its claim upon our obedience when we have rejected the claims of custom. The true land of promise must be now, as of old, the inheritance of faith, and not merely of disbelief in error.

These were some of the considerations which suggested themselves to us as we read Professor Arnold's brief sketch of Heine's life and writings. Most of our readers will no doubt have seen it. Few can have failed to read it with the intensest interest. It needs no tribute of praise on our part; but we are unwilling to pass it by without at least an expression of gratitude to its author. It shows us Heine in his weakness and in his noble strength; 'without moral balance,' 'deficient in self-respect, in true dignity of character,' and yet an earnest 'soldier in the war of liberation of humanity.' We know that Heine laboured long, unceasingly, unselfishly, for this one object, the liberation of humanity; and more, that he has done very much towards its accomplishment, in the sense, that is, in which he aimed at it. If it were enough to throw scorn on the unreasonableness of old rules, or on the absurdity of old dogmas, if it were enough to free men from the fetters of old systems, partly intellectual, partly customary, and to upset, in the name of the unknown future, the existing guarantees for order and therefore for progress, if this could be done safely, and nothing remained to be done but to await the further progress of emancipation, and to make merry over the downfall of kingdoms and religions, as though these were mankind's worst enemies, and our only business with them could be to get rid of them as fast as possible—we could not then doubt that it was indeed a holy war in which Heinrich Heine was engaged, and that he has earned our gratitude by the services he has done to the cause of enslaved humanity. But we know, alas! that a service such as this is useful only on the condition that it be on the

whole a failure. Intellectual emancipation is of necessity the privilege of the few, and it is a perilous privilege even for those most fitted to enjoy it. What real message had Heine for the German people—for the peoples of modern Europe? what message that they could listen to, or whose contents could help them if they heard it? It is a strange idea of human society to suppose that we can serve it best by most effectually knocking it to pieces. Such a process of demolition may indeed become necessary, but it is at best a necessary evil. Our truest thanks are due not to those who teach us how to destroy, but to those who can discharge the higher task of teaching us to repair our losses. 'The ideas of 1789,' however wittily applied, will scarcely furnish us with what we require. The modern spirit has failed hitherto to accomplish the task it set itself; and it has failed no doubt because it has been too exclusively critical in its method, and only negative in its results. Far be it from us to say one word in opposition to those ideas, or to that spirit. We desire only that their work should be completed; not merely that old things should pass away, but, further, that all things should become new. But we desire too that the older institutions and ideas 'which have come down to us from times not modern' should not only be regarded as present obstacles to the liberation of humanity. It would be narrow liberalism indeed to deny their services in the past; and those alone who are prepared to supply their place have any right to lift one finger to destroy them. These are the grounds, then, on which we doubt whether Heinrich Heine can be said to have attained truly, in the highest sense, even an intellectual deliverance. It was his mission to destroy. The war he waged was a war of extermination. We do not think he had either the temper or the knowledge that could have enabled him to recreate.

Dr. Johnson used to say that to him biography was the most interesting and the most instructive kind of history. The remark could hardly have been made in the present day; but we must remember that history as a science was unknown to Johnson and his contemporaries. We doubt whether, even now, literary history could be taught in a more delightful form than by a series of well-chosen biographical sketches; or whether we should gain much scientifically by a more elaborate and more methodical treatment. The very few principles which are really known can be introduced into a biography as easily as they can be given in any other form; and to the general reader the abstract must remain for ever less attractive than the concrete, and not less attractive only, but really less instructive. The form is of course of more importance in the latter kind of writing than it is in the former. If an abstract treatise deserves only the praise of being an intellectual masterpiece, it may be dull and uninviting in manner without much loss of merit. But dullness is the very greatest fault of which a biography is capable. Incorrectness of detail even would be far more excusable. The latter would of course diminish in no slight degree its value. The former would leave it without any possible capacity of other merit.

We have said already that we believe Professor Arnold to be a genuine critic. He is, above all, always fair, always ready to see the utmost possible good in that with which his nature does not lead him to sympathize. German dullness does not weary him out, he can discern genius in Scotchmen, and can hold the balance even, when he is weighing the merits of his own countrymen against those of foreigners. We must add to this, that he is a genuine artist too. Seldom does he misplace a sentence, or throw away even a single adjective. A biography from his pen is indeed delightful reading. His

men and women preserve all their individual features, and yet become, to use an expression of Emerson's, 'representative.' Little gems of biography are scattered indeed all over his writings, for he can make a sentence do as much work as many men can get out of a chapter. But we need only refer now to his sketches of Heinrich Heine and Mademoiselle Eugénie de Guérin for an abundant confirmation of what we say. It is scarcely possible for us to conceive two beings more different than these. Heine, the child of the Revolution, a thorough modern, whose special mission it was to introduce the French spirit into the thought and literature of Germany, and yet with every moral fault but just those which would have unfitted him to be 'a brilliant soldier of the war of the liberation of humanity.' And Eugénie de Guérin, French, and yet a Catholic of the Catholics, to whom religion and love were the mainstay of her soul and being. She cared little for ideas, her attachments were essentially personal, and above all, to one person, her brother. With an exquisite love of beauty in art and nature, with an infinite sense of true grandeur in art and life, it is by the rare qualities of her *soul* that she has obtained (if indeed, as Professor Arnold tells us, she has obtained) an imperishable name in literature. It is no little proof of the biographer's own width of sympathy, that he has been able to throw himself so completely into these so opposite characters; to feel with them as far as he might, to think their thoughts, and, when that was possible no longer, to feel for them, and bear as it were their sorrows.

'It may be predicted,' says Professor Arnold, 'that in the literature of other countries, too, the French spirit is destined to make its influence felt as an element, in alliance with the native spirit, of novelty and movement, as it has made its influence felt in German literature.' We are content to accept the prediction, but we wish to lay down

clearly within what limits we accept it. Now the French spirit is essentially critical. As applied to literature proper, it is scientific rather than imaginative; it is distinguished by precision and concentration of thought; it is sensible rather than inspired. We shall not need to look to France for models of creative genius. Such models, indeed, the French certainly possess; but it is not the characteristic of the French spirit to produce them, and we have no occasion to borrow in a matter in which our wants are already so amply supplied. But the French are, as they have ever been, better critics than ourselves. They have swept away for themselves, more effectually than we have, the cobwebs of thought and language in which the unwary are so readily entangled. They may err, as they often have erred, through an excess of national vanity, but at least their process of thought does not rest essentially upon a system of elaborate error. They are not learned pedants, as the Germans are; nor unlearned pedants, like some among the English. The nets of metaphysics for them are spread in vain. They are too clear, as their enemies would say too shallow, thinkers to be subject to such delusions. Our literature will feel their influence, as far as we find ourselves, as a nation, compelled to admit their ideas. The process must be, as such a process always is, a slow one. Individuals, here and there, will be first influenced, and the mass in due time will follow. It is something that they are consistently held before us as models by some of our best, if not our most popular writers; and the change, when it has once really commenced, is likely to go forward rapidly. But men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles; and we may hope to imitate them as critics only when we have consented to make their forms of thought our own. Those who are best acquainted with those forms will best appreciate the vastness of the change which such consent

on our part would imply, and will be content to wait patiently for a result which they will know is certain.

'But,' the reader may ask, 'is it not a better thing to create than to criticize the creations of others? Shall we need to borrow anything from the spirit of modern France, if we possess already a higher and more noble spirit?' The objection is a plausible one; but, in the first place, it seems to deal with the question as if it could be a matter of choice whether we would follow along with the tendencies of modern Europe. We may hang back, it is true, for awhile, and permit the great drama of the Revolution to be played on without us. Our insular position and our antecedents, although in both these respects we are less favoured than Japan, may continue to delay a change which is yet inevitable. But there is too close a union between the nations of Western Europe, too constant an interchange of thoughts and sympathies, for it to be possible for one of them to take a step in advance, without sooner or later affecting all the others. We may choose to relinquish to others the dangerous honour of leading the vanguard, but the spoils of the victory will none the less be ours, even though we have declined to bear our share in the day's burden. There is no playing with the modern spirit, no accepting it in part, and as far only as we choose to accept it. We must be content that it shall possess us, and govern us; and that government and possession we must accept frankly, with all its consequences. The modern spirit must pervade our literature, as well as our politics and our religion. We shall have no power to choose for ourselves at what precise point its influence shall cease.

Again, what is this creative power on which we pride ourselves? What masterpieces has it produced of late? what permanent additions has it made to our higher literature? Let us quote from Professor Arnold a brief



but discriminating sketch of the kind of work which has been done by our greatest recent poets. It may serve to show us in some degree the losses which we have sustained by our national waywardness; it may serve to teach us how great has been our wasteful misapplication of the highest creative genius.

'We in England,' says the Professor, 'in our great burst of literature during the first thirty years of the present century, had no manifestation of the modern spirit, as this spirit manifests itself in Goethe's works or Heine's. And the reason is not far to seek. We had neither the German wealth of ideas nor the French enthusiasm for applying ideas. There reigned in the mass of the nation that inveterate inaccessibility of ideas, that Philistinism—to use the German nickname—which reacts even on the individual genius that is exempt from it.' And then, after speaking of the work done by Shakespeare and Spenser, who applied to literature, as far as the advance of thought had permitted, the then modern spirit, and after telling us how the great English middle class, whose intelligent sympathy had upheld Shakespeare and Shakespeare's contemporaries, a few years afterwards entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned on it there for two hundred years, he goes on to describe the attempt made by two Englishmen to create a properly modern literature, and their failure.

In the literary movement of the beginning of the nineteenth century the signal attempt to apply freely the modern spirit was made in England by two members of the aristocratic class, Byron and Shelley. But Byron and Shelley did not succeed in their attempt freely to apply the modern spirit in English literature; they could not succeed in it; the resistance to baffle them, the want of intelligent sympathy to guide and uphold them, were too great. Their literary creation, compared with the literary creation of Shakespeare and Spenser, compared with the literary creation of Goethe and Heine, is a failure. The best literary creation of that time in England proceeded from men who did not make the same bold

attempt as Byron and Shelley.—What in fact was the career of the chief English men of letters, their contemporaries? The greatest of them, Wordsworth, retired (in middle-age phrase) into a monastery. I mean, he plunged himself in the inward life, he voluntarily cut himself off from the modern spirit. Coleridge took to opium. Scott became the historiographer royal of feudalism. Keats passionately gave himself up to a sensuous genius, to his faculty for interpreting nature; and he died of consumption at twenty-five. Wordsworth, Scott, and Keats have left admirable works; far more solid and complete works than those which Byron and Shelley have left. But their works have this defect—they do not belong to that which is the main current of the literature of modern epochs, they do not apply modern ideas to life; they constitute, therefore, *minor currents*, and all other literary work of our day, however popular, which has the same defect, also constitutes but a minor current. Byron and Shelley will long be remembered, long after the inadequacy of their actual work is clearly recognized, for their passionate, their Titanic effort to flow in the main stream of modern literature; their names will be greater than their writings; *stat magni nominis umbra*.

Now, apart from the objection that the above sketch does not attempt to value what Coleridge did as a prose writer—it may be a sufficient account of his inspiration as a poet to say that he ‘took to opium’—we can see no reason to dispute its correctness and adequacy. Such a history as it unfolds is in truth a melancholy record of the highest faculties, not indeed quite wasted, but turned to an unworthy purpose, unworthy of their century, unworthy of themselves.

Further, we may see from the above examples that the modern spirit, critical though it is, is scarcely less truly creative. We cannot doubt that for a time its merely critical tendency is likely to predominate, but it has none the less a creative energy of its own. It is at present a spirit as it were without a body; moving, indeed, upon the face of the waters, but with its work not yet accomplished; finding the earth still without form and void. It cannot, then, idealize, except by anticipation, a state of society which does not yet exist; and its work in literature

is therefore mainly critical. The shifting phases of modern life cannot as yet furnish it with its proper stimulus. A revolution, though it has extended over five eventful centuries, is no proper subject for noble poetry. The modern spirit has not indeed lost faith in ideas: it is of its very essence that it has not; its life and being are bound up with them. But it has been taught that some ideas, which it once supposed final, are not final—are not even properly its own. They were sufficient in their day to furnish matter for the genius of a Shakespeare; but if we compare Shakespeare with Goethe, we may see how vastly the course of time and experience has changed the direction of the spirit of modern Europe. It is not in the difference of their personal characters that we can find an explanation of their essential difference as poets. We must seek it rather in the difference of their circumstances, or, to borrow a word from the French, of their *environment*. We have ceased more completely than ever to believe in the permanence of the present, or in the possibility of containing new wine in the tatters of old bottles; but we have not therefore surrendered one particle of our confidence about the future. When the reconstruction which we are seeking has been brought about, when the work of creation is over, the time will then come to celebrate with songs of triumph the destinies of a new-born world. We may be content at present that the modern spirit in literature should display itself chiefly as critical.

## V.

### PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND<sup>1</sup>.

THE Public Schools Commissioners have at length issued their long-expected and most valuable Report. They have brought together a great mass of evidence, from the highest authorities, upon the system and management of our principal public schools; they have suggested various changes which they think desirable, in the subjects taught, in the manner of teaching them, and generally, in the disposal of the revenues, and the constitution of our schools, and the relations of the different members of their governing bodies. By the terms of their commission they were directed to inquire into 'the Nature and Application of the Endowments, Funds, and Revenues' of Eton, Winchester, Westminster, Charterhouse, St. Paul's, Merchant Taylors', Harrow, Rugby, and Shrewsbury; and further, into 'the Administration and Management of the said Colleges, Schools, and Foundations, and into the system and course of studies respectively pursued therein as well as into the Methods, Subjects, and Extent of the Instruction given to the Students of the said Colleges, Schools, and Foundations'; and we are bound to state that they have discharged, most laboriously and con-

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Revenues and Management of certain Colleges and Schools, and the Studies pursued and Instruction given therein; with an Appendix and Evidence.* London: 1864.

scientiously, a great public trust ; and have furnished us with information of the highest value, which it would have been impossible otherwise to obtain ; and with a systematic body of general as well as special 'Recommendations,' prepared with great care, and with great good sense. With the whole of these we cannot, indeed, profess our own agreement ; it seems to us that even if the proposed changes were introduced, an undue pre-eminence would still be given to the study of the Greek and Latin classics ; but we recognize in them an important advance upon the system pursued at present, and where we venture to differ, we shall differ with hesitation and regret. But on this branch of our subject we need not yet enlarge. It will be necessary for us to go into the question at some length in the course of the present article.

The details elicited in the course of the examinations of boys and masters are many of them curious and interesting. We learn the opinions that both have formed about their schools, the kind of treatment the boys are subjected to, the moral tone of the place, the intellectual tastes of the boys themselves, the subjects taught and the manner of teaching them, and the results, if any, of the process. Every question that could suggest itself on any subject tending to throw light upon the real state of our public schools, and the efficiency of the education they profess to give, seems to have been asked by the Commissioners, and answered, in most cases candidly, by the witnesses. The results of the Commission appear in four thick quarto volumes. They contain a general and a special Report on the points about which it was directed to inquire ; an Appendix made up of the answers of the masters and governing bodies of the schools to a set of printed questions addressed to all of them, and a good many letters and recommendations upon various points written, at the Commissioners' request, partly by masters

of schools other than those included in the terms of their Commission, and partly by Professors and Tutors at the two Universities; and, lastly, the oral evidence given by the various witnesses summoned before the Commissioners in person. Of the vast mass of information thus collected we cannot profess to record more than a few points which have struck us as of especial interest. The volumes themselves are published, and we recommend them heartily to the reader's own attention. No one can read them without being instructed and amused, and, we must add, not unfrequently disgusted and indignant. A decent veil is thrown over some of the worst vices common at our public schools, but quite enough is revealed to tell us of the existence of evils of the first magnitude—evils so great as to make us pause and ask whether a system which appears to foster them is not too bad to be reformed at all, and whether more harm than good has not, in too many cases, been the result of these time-honoured institutions. It was chiefly in consequence of the complaints made against Eton that the Commission was originally instituted; and we find, accordingly, that Eton occupies the greatest space both in the Report and Evidence. Its yearly income from endowments amounts to more than twenty thousand pounds. The moral state of the school is not proved to be worse than that of many others with less or no endowment; the bullying is not excessive; the fagging is not such as to constitute a real hardship; the work of the masters is very hard, extending, as it does, over about fourteen hours each day; the boys are stated to attach no value whatever to intellectual eminence, and to consider it a disgraceful thing if any one of their number attends to his lessons. We need scarcely add that the list of Eton honours at the Universities is meagre—very meagre indeed, if we except those gained by the Collegers.

Harrow, with an income of less than two thousand pounds, can show a better list of University distinctions than Eton. In fact, however, the greater part of the boys at both Eton and Harrow come from a class that does not expect to have to work for its own subsistence, and they are content accordingly to yield the prizes for intellectual distinction to schools of a lower social status; to Marlborough, or Rugby, or Cheltenham.

Winchester appears to do the work it undertakes very well indeed. Its *curriculum* is narrow, and there is no wish on the part of the authorities to enlarge it. The staff of masters, too, is somewhat slender. The Commissioners recommend its increase. The aim of Winchester seems to be rather to send up a large number of men well grounded in their work, than to aim at the special cultivation of a few at the possible expense of the many. Its list of high honours is not great, but there is no complaint made that Winchester men come ill-prepared to the University.

There is a great deal of conflicting evidence as to the state of things at Westminster. Those who represent the case most favourably for the College allow that bullying prevails to a degree elsewhere unparalleled, and that the fagging is so excessive that, for example, a boy in the first year he is in College can find no time for his school-work, but is engaged chiefly in lighting fires, or cleaning candlesticks, or running messages for his school superiors. To such an extent is this carried, that an average boy, according to the headmaster's statement, regularly loses ground during the year in which he is a junior<sup>1</sup>.

The state of Charterhouse appears satisfactory enough

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. p. 510, §§ 3473-3477. The whole of this evidence seems the most extraordinary with which the Commission have been favoured. *Sont-ce là des hommes ou des bêtes féroces?*

in all but the unhealthiness of its position. As Charterhouse is chiefly a boarding-school, the evil admits of a very obvious remedy, not equally applicable to St. Paul's and Merchant Taylors', which suffer in the same way, though to a less extent than Charterhouse.

The system of teaching at Merchant Taylors' seems good and thorough. The boys do well at the Universities. St. Paul's has, on this point, been characterized somewhat more favourably than it deserves. It may be said in its defence that its boys come chiefly from the lower middle class, and are not trained for the Universities. It is not, however, in the lower part of the school that the evil exists.

The chief praise bestowed by the Commissioners is reserved for Rugby and Shrewsbury. Both of these schools show a good list of really high honours at the Universities. The Rugby list is absolutely the best, and far beyond any other; but Shrewsbury, it must be remembered, is a small school, with no great revenue, whose boys and masters must work hard if it is to keep its place with our larger public schools. We may add that the list of Shrewsbury distinctions, as compared with most others, is too good to stand in any need of an allowance for these disadvantages.

Rugby boys have been long known as bringing up with them to the University a more formed character than is the common result of the training at a public school. Their highest honour is for intellect, not for cricket; and they demand, too, that intellect itself shall be directed to a worthy end before its claims upon their respect can be admitted. Rugby 'moral earnestness' has been a little laughed at, but for all that, in boys and masters too, it is a very grand reality. We speak, of course, only of the best class of Rugby boys. There are bad and indifferent to be found; but it is not in their power to become



leaders of public opinion, as they are elsewhere. Rugby men are not the most popular at College; they do not come up as well fitted for the mixed society of the little world as men from Eton or Harrow. They are a little too uncompromising; a little too obtrusively high-principled; and not unfrequently a little too conceited. They are full-grown men before they have really ceased to be boys; and they have formed their opinions and can deliver them offhand upon most subjects under the heavens, or above them. But these are merely surface faults, not easily forgiven, indeed, while they exist, but quite certain not to last for ever. The character which they disfigure is often a very noble one, and it becomes known and recognized as such when the offensive outside has been worn away.

The spectacle of Rugby seems fairly to have carried the Commissioners off their legs with enthusiasm. Their style rises with their subject. They write no longer prose, but dithyrambs. After telling us that 'the moral and religious training of the boys at Rugby is considered by the masters as the end of a Rugby education paramount to all others,' that 'the tutors aim at this in their intercourse with the pupils, and the Sixth Form are looked up to by the younger boys, though still in the character of boys, yet as the guardians of the school's good name,' and that 'smoking is generally condemned as affectation, drinking<sup>1</sup> as bravado'; they proceed to sum up these and many other excellences in the following eloquent passage:—

A headmaster whose character for ability and zeal and practical success promise to make him conspicuous on the list of Rugby headmasters; a staff of assistants who combine with skill, ability, and knowledge such a lively personal interest in the School as induces them to make habitual sacrifices for its welfare; a system of mental

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 259, § 53.

training which comprehends almost every subject by which the minds of boys can be enlarged and invigorated ; a traditional spirit among the boys of respect and honour for intellectual work ; a system of discipline which, while maintaining the noble and wholesome tradition of public schools, that the older and more industrious should command and govern the rest, still holds in reserve a maturer discretion to moderate excess, guide uncertainty, and also to support the legitimate exercise of power ; a system of physical training which, while it distinguishes the strong, strengthens the studious and spares the weak ; a religious cultivation which, although active, is not overstrained, but leaves something for solemn occasions to bring out ;—such are some of the general conditions which have presented themselves to notice during our investigation. They go far also, we think, to explain that public confidence which the School has for many years possessed, and never since the days of Arnold in larger measure than at the present moment<sup>1</sup>.

The picture is a telling one, but it is the work of an artist, rather than of a Commissioner. It would have been more life-like if the colouring had been more subdued, and laid on a little less profusely. Perhaps, too, in mere artistic effect it would have lost nothing by the change.

It is obvious that the schools which we have named, about which the Commissioners were directed to inquire, are quite sufficient to enable us to get a pretty thorough insight into the system of public education established in this country for the upper and middle classes. Of course many well-known public schools are not included in the list ; and we might ask whether Manchester Grammar School, for example, had not, considering the number and quality of the men it sends to the Universities, at least as much right to be counted among our great national institutions as St. Paul's, which seldom sends up a decently qualified man at all. Radley, Rossall, Marlborough, and other schools of the kind, were omitted, we presume, as unendowed. But with all these exceptions, and it would be easy to add many more, we have quite material enough upon which we may form a judgement of our system, and

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 298.

of the manner in which it works ; and we have, further, information furnished us to enable us to compare it with the system pursued in schools of the same class in France and Germany. On one point, indeed, of no slight importance—the relative cost of education here and on the Continent—we are told nothing ; but we are told that a boy's school bills for a year at Eton sometimes amount to two hundred and ten pounds, and that a hundred and fifty is not more than a fair average. If we were told, as we might have been, that a better education was to be had by a boarder in a French lyceum for thirty-six pounds a year, the contrast would have been at least startling ; and it would not have been made less so by the enumeration we find of the many sins of commission and omission of which the higher authorities at Eton are habitually guilty. On the comparative expense, however, of English schools among themselves we gain a good deal of very interesting information. We learn, to give the results as briefly as possible, that an oppidan's annual bills at Eton range from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and ten pounds ; that at Winchester the corresponding bills range from a hundred to a maximum of a hundred and fifty, the average being about a hundred and sixteen ; that at Westminster the average expenses are about the same, but the maximum a little lower ; that at Charterhouse the headmaster considers that a hundred pounds represents fairly the average school expenses of each boarder ; that at St. Paul's, a day-school only, the instruction given is wholly gratuitous ; that at Merchant Taylors', a school of the same class, the charge is ten pounds a year, and that a good deal more is actually paid for extra tuition ; that the average expense at Harrow ranges from a hundred and thirty-eight pounds to a hundred and fifty, with a maximum of about a hundred and eighty—an amount, however, not frequently reached ; while at Rugby the range is between a hundred and

a hundred and fifty, with an average of not more than about a hundred and thirty; and at Shrewsbury the average falls as low as about a hundred, and the whole necessary expenses can be defrayed for as little as ninety pounds a year.

All these schools are, of course, endowed; some of them, and Eton in particular, endowed very largely. We could wish the Commissioners had insisted more upon the necessity that these charges should be reduced. The lowest terms, where board as well as instruction is given, are such as to make it quite impossible for the greater part of the middle classes to enjoy the advantages of a public school education; while the possibility of their reduction may be proved by the fact that at Marlborough, with little or no aid from endowment at all, as good an education is given at about half the expense—the name and prestige and associations of an old foundation being the only things in which a school like Marlborough can be thought deficient.

If we turn from England to France, from Eton to the Toulouse Lyceum, the difference in expense is still greater; while the quality of the education varies probably in about an inverse proportion to the expense. At the first-class Academy at Toulouse 'a boarder' (we quote from Professor Arnold's report) 'pays for his whole board and instruction, in the lowest division, twenty-four pounds a year; in the second division, twenty-six; in the highest division, thirty-six pounds. In the scientific class the charge is two pounds extra. The payments are made quarterly, and always in advance. Every boarder brings with him an outfit (*trousseau*), valued at twenty pounds: the sum paid for his board and instruction covers, besides, all expenses for keeping good this outfit, and all charges for washing, medical attendance, books, and writing materials. The meals, though plain, are good, and they are set

out with a propriety and a regard for appearances which, when I was a boy, graced no school-dinners that I ever saw.' Add to this, that to every lyceum which receives boarders, public scholarships are attached which clear their holders from all expense for their education; and then, side by side with this scale of charges, put the bills of an oppidan at Eton, or of a college whose education ought to be wholly defrayed from the school endowments, but whose annual expenses are estimated at about fifty pounds, and really range between seventy and ninety.

This question of the cost of education would be an important one, if we looked at it merely as a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. But it is much more, very much more than this. An expensive school is all the more likely to be a bad school—a place where habits of industry are positively discouraged—whose scholars are taken from that select portion of the upper classes which can boast, with truth, that it has never been compelled to be of any use, and whose younger members promise well to keep up the traditions of their high order. Of course, a connexion such as this is eminently respectable; we judge of the real value of a thing by what we should find ourselves compelled to pay for it; and it would be felt, no doubt, that to make Eton cheap would be to lower its social dignity. We find, however, that this kind of dignity is not to be maintained without its corresponding drawbacks—serious enough in any place, especially serious in a place which professes to give boys the highest education possible. 'Position and influence in the school,' say the Commissioners, in their report on Eton, 'are gained chiefly, and almost<sup>1</sup> exclusively, by excellence in the cricket-field or on the river. The character, indeed, of a boy is important to his position; but intellectual distinctions have little weight in this respect. There is nothing that makes work fashion-

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 91.

able among the oppidans. A boy has no chance of becoming one of the leading boys of the school by work. "If he can do anything else, if he can row or play cricket, or any other athletic game, I do not think," says a good authority, Mr. Mitchell, "that he is thought the worse of for reading." It would be a waste of words to add any comment on such a statement as the above, brought forward as it is, and endorsed by the Commissioners themselves. We will say only that it would be most unfair to allow the blame to rest wholly on the school authorities. The causes of the evil are far more deeply seated ; they depend, really, upon the whole condition of our English social system.

It will be better, perhaps, without going into further detail about the comparative success of our public schools as places of teaching, to enter upon a general account of the kind of knowledge which they profess to aim at giving, and of its fitness to be made, as it is, the chief and recognized means of education both at schools and at the universities ; to raise the question, in short, whether and within what limits the study of Greek and Latin literature should be pursued ? The matter, we must premise, is one upon which schools have hardly any choice allowed them. Their system of education is almost necessarily based upon that established at our universities. The chief aim of a schoolmaster's teaching is, that his boys may start well on their career at College ; and the rewards which they succeed in winning furnish, perhaps, the fairest standard by which his success as a teacher can be measured. The classical system, however, is adapted to three orders of men, and to three only ; and for these it has been found to answer admirably. In the first place, there is the very large class of men with independent means, who go up to College chiefly that they may associate with those of their own age ; make acquaintances—perhaps friends—who may

be useful to them in after-life ; take a degree, if possible ; and return home to enjoy the congratulations of their friends, and the amount of credit which attaches to an Oxford or Cambridge Bachelor of Arts. Intellectual culture is a thing which, of course, they do not need. They would resent any attempt to force it upon them. They thank God, if at all, because they *are* as other men are, and are not pedants or philosophers. All that they have gained at College they might have gained as well by going into the army, or travelling on the continent. They have enjoyed themselves well enough, have practised, or learned, the manners of gentlemen, and have had some experience either of the wretchedness of getting into debt; or of the comfort of living within their means ; and if so, they have reached the object for which they were sent to the University at all. The society in which they are henceforth to live will not be very critical in its judgement of the measure of their literary attainments.

Secondly, there are the men who are going to the Bar, and these need to have their faculties so trained and exercised as to fit them for the work which lies before them. It is much the same to them what subjects they learn, provided only they be sufficiently complex and difficult. Oxford science or Cambridge mathematics will serve about equally well for them to whet their wits upon. In their case, it is the process of acquisition that is of value, and not the thing acquired. They are well contented to forget the substance of what they have learned, and to retain only the habit and power of learning. They are aided in their work at the Universities chiefly by the eager competition which is excited by the high and valuable rewards which are offered for real success.

Thirdly, there are the men who are intended to take Orders in the Church. These form the largest class of all, and their peculiar wants are, perhaps, the most em-

barrassing. The standard of examination must be low, or they would, very many of them, be unable to pass at all; and, at the same time, they must be sent out into the world so trained as to be able to assume the position of superiors over those whose guides and teachers they are henceforth to be. These requirements, inconsistent as they may appear, are met by the peculiar nature of the subjects selected for their instruction. If their claim to superiority were based upon a knowledge of history, or physical science, or modern literature, they would not long be able to maintain it. But of all these things they are, as a body, confessedly ignorant. They have gone to the fountain-head; they have studied the great writers of antiquity; they do not concern themselves with shallow modern thoughts, or erroneous modern discoveries. In other words, they have acquired, after about fifteen years' study, a minimum of Greek and Latin scholarship, which might fairly represent something less than a twelvemonth's real hard work; and they live for the rest of their lives upon a reputation for knowing more than they do, about subjects of which their congregation may probably know nothing. And this reputation of theirs is, by common consent or connivance, very firmly fixed indeed. It survives their conversation; it survives even their sermons. They continue to be 'superior men.' The system of instruction devised for them has been certainly an eminent success; but to attain such success, or to bestow such instruction, can scarcely be considered as within the proper business of a University.

We say nothing of the small band of scholars, to whatever profession they may nominally belong, who are not contented to confine themselves to the subjects which the University proposes as its necessary and regular course; who have a sense of what education really means, and who endeavour, apart from the stimulus of honours, to carry



out their ideal, loving, above all things, truth and knowledge, and desiring, themselves, as far as may be, to attain them. We say nothing of these—not that there are none such at the Universities, but that their work of self-education is wellnigh all their own, and goes on with little either of assistance or encouragement or reward. It would be about equally unfair to ignore the fact that such men are to be found, and to select them as proper instances of the results of university education.

Now, as long as the battle as to what kind of education was desirable was waged between the advocates of an existing system, which proposed to train and develop the intellectual faculties, and the advocates of a merely professional teaching, which was chiefly to aim at imparting such knowledge as could be turned to immediate account in after life, the victory of the former was comparatively easy. It was felt that there was a real danger of narrowing a man's mental range within the limits necessary for his profession, and that his success, even in that, would be imperfect, if his powers had been cultivated only as far as their cultivation might be expected to prove immediately remunerative. Great names, it is true, were to be found on both sides of the question, and great ability was displayed in the support of either position; but the victory, by common consent, was adjudged to the defenders of the existing method, and the system, as a whole, was allowed to remain unaltered. The course of time, however, has wrought some changes since the days of Edgeworth and Sydney Smith, of Davison and Coplestone. It is true, indeed, that classical studies have kept their old pre-eminence. Our practice as a nation seems still to rest upon a belief that it is through them only that the highest education is possible; but the number of dissentients is daily growing larger and more respectable, and other studies, too, are beginning to raise their heads, not indeed,

as yet, to an equality with classics, but so as to be recognized as at least useful adjuncts, and, in their way, even necessary. This is about the state of things which is now established at our Universities, and the Commissioners content themselves with recommending that corresponding changes should be introduced into our public schools. Classics are not to be the only things taught. Modern languages, physical science, and music or drawing, are to take a place with mathematics, as auxiliary studies; but classics are to occupy as much time as, or more than all the rest together, and it is on them that the chief reliance is to be based for a sound and thorough education. The following table will show the relative importance which the Commissioners attach to the respective studies, if we may judge from the number of hours which they would wish to be devoted to each of them:—

It is essential (they say) that every part of the regular course of study should have assigned to it a due proportion of the whole time given to study—a proportion to be measured by its requirements, and by its relative importance.

The following scheme for the distribution of the school or class lessons in a week is suggested as furnishing a comparative scale:—

I. Classics, with History or Divinity	.	.	.	.	11
II. Arithmetic and Mathematics	.	.	.	.	3
III. French or German	.	.	.	.	2
IV. Natural Science	.	.	.	.	2
V. Music and Drawing	.	.	.	.	2
					—
					20

It is here assumed that the school lessons take about an hour each, and that they will be such as to demand for preparation in the case of classics ten additional hours, and in those of modern languages and natural science respectively, at least two additional hours in the course of the week; and that composition will demand about five hours<sup>1</sup>.

They recommend further that substantial marks should be given for non-classical subjects, and that proficiency in

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 34, § 9.

them should affect a boy's place in the school. By these means, and by special prizes, they hope to counteract the tendency of a principal study to encroach upon, and unduly depress the others, to monopolize the energies of the masters, and draw to itself the whole respect and attention of the boys.

We gladly welcome the proposed changes as constituting a very great advance upon the system at present followed. At all the nine schools, indeed, which came under the Commissioners' notice, the old *curriculum* has been so far varied, that attention is already paid to other subjects than Greek and Latin; but the plan followed is far from uniform, and physical science, in particular, is almost totally neglected. If the above scale of hours were made (as, in the absence of a better, it ought to be) compulsory, the non-classical subjects would occupy a sounder and firmer position than they can be thought to do at present; the subjects themselves would be felt to be worth learning, and their teachers (an almost essential matter) would be more likely to command the boys' respect. But we should be glad to put the classical system, even so modified, a little upon the defensive, and to ask why so much time should still be devoted to classics, to the necessary exclusion, *pro tanto*, of other subjects, which might well appear to possess a higher interest in the present, and to need a very strong case to be made against them as the proper means of education?

The point is one upon which the Commissioners speak decidedly. They are of opinion 'that the classical languages and literature should continue to hold<sup>1</sup>, as they now do, the principal place in school education.' One of the chief merits of the public schools has been, they tell us, that in spite of many defects in their working, they have at least kept alive and cherished a taste for such

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 30.

literature. They have done little else, it is true, and have not even done well the little they have attempted; but their boys, ignorant indeed of all that the world around them knows and values most highly, have been flogged through their Greek and Latin grammars, have been forced to commit to memory a vast number of Greek and Latin verses, and have been trained to a certain kind of perfection in a certain kind of doggerel Greek and Latin composition, mannered in a style which English ears have been taught to consider good, but which would be as little appreciated by the rest of Europe, as it would have been by the nations themselves whose literature is thus parodied.

But the possession even of this amount of skill and knowledge is far from following as a matter of course, even from a long public school education. The majority who leave school could not be termed scholars, even by courtesy; while a large number whose work is afterwards tested at the Universities, and of course a still larger number who never appear at the Universities at all, have contrived to pass from form to form in a state of chaotic ignorance of classical and of all other learning—an ignorance disgraceful alike to the boy and to his master.

If a youth (we read) after four or five years spent at school, quits it at nineteen, unable to construe an easy bit of Latin or Greek without the help of a dictionary, or to write Latin grammatically, almost ignorant of geography and of the history of his own country, unacquainted with any modern language but his own, and hardly competent to write English correctly, to do a simple sum, or to stumble through an easy proposition of Euclid, a total stranger to the laws which govern the physical world, and to its structure, with an eye and hand unpractised in drawing, and without knowing a note of music, with an uncultivated mind and no taste for reading or observation, his intellectual education must, certainly be accounted a failure, though there may be no fault to find with his principles, character, or manners. We by no means intend to represent this as a type of the

ordinary product of English public-school education ; but speaking both from the evidence we have received, and from opportunities of observation open to all, we must say that it is a type much more common than it ought to be,—and that the proportion of failures is, therefore, unduly large<sup>1</sup>.

But this sort of thing, it may be urged, is the fault, not of the system itself, but of the manner in which it has been worked, and of the subjects submitted to its operation. Neglect on the master's part, aided by stupidity on the part of the pupil, might produce such a result, perhaps singly, certainly combined, under any system of education, however perfect in theory, and however capable, if properly applied, of fulfilling its intended functions. A classical training should be judged by its best, not by its worst products—by its successes, not by its failures, though the latter may be far too common to be passed over as exceptional. There is truth, no doubt, in this. We will observe only that if it were desired to make the number of such failures as large as possible, it might best be done by selecting a study at once the most unattractive to the pupil, and the least likely, for anything he can see, to be of the slightest use to him, and that experience has shown that these conditions are fulfilled by Greek and Latin ; and will pass on to consider the kind of objects which the advocates of a classical system propose in education, and how far classics are necessary for their attainment. On this subject we find the following opinions expressed in the Commissioners' General Report. After stating that they believe it to be desirable there should be some one principal branch of study to which the largest share of time and attention should be given, and that the study of the classical languages and literature does at present occupy this position in all the great English schools, they go on to speak of the special fitness of this

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 31.

study, to which they consider that the foremost place has, not without reason, been assigned.

Grammar is the logic of common speech, and there are few educated men who are not sensible of the advantages they gained as boys from the steady practice of composition and translation, and from their introduction to etymology. The study of literature is the study, not indeed of the physical but of the intellectual and moral world we live in, and of the thoughts, lives, and characters of those men whose writings or whose memories succeeding generations have thought it worth while to preserve.

We are equally convinced that the best materials available to Englishmen for these studies are furnished by the languages and literature of Greece and Rome. From the regular structure of these languages, from their logical accuracy of expression, from the comparative ease with which their etymology is traced and reduced to general laws, from their severe canons of taste and style, from the very fact that they are 'dead,' and have been handed down to us directly from the period of their highest perfection, comparatively untouched by the inevitable process of degeneration and decay, they are, beyond all doubt, the finest and most serviceable models we have for the study of language. As literature they supply the most graceful and some of the noblest poetry, the finest eloquence, the deepest philosophy, the wisest historical writing; and these excellencies are such as to be appreciated keenly, though inadequately, by young minds, and to leave, as in fact they do, a lasting impression. Beside this, it is at least a reasonable opinion that this literature has had a powerful effect in moulding and animating the statesmanship and political life of England. Nor is it to be forgotten that the whole civilization of modern Europe is really built upon the foundations laid two thousand years ago by two highly civilized nations on the shores of the Mediterranean; that their languages supply the key to our modern tongues; their poetry, history, philosophy, and law, to the poetry and history, the philosophy and jurisprudence, of modern times; that this key can seldom be acquired except in youth, and that the possession of it, as daily experience proves, and as those who have it not will most readily acknowledge, is very far from being merely a literary advantage<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to this, there may be collected from the volumes before us a vast mass of evidence tending in the same direction, and given with the authority of great

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 28. The whole subject is discussed at some length in this and the following pages.

names, and of men engaged in the practical work of education. There is, indeed, a general consensus of opinion, not in favour of the exclusive study of classics, but in favour of their being recognized as the principal study in our schools and our Universities; and expression has been given, not without reason, to the great practical difficulties in the way of any fundamental change in the *curriculum* hitherto established. Far be it from us to decry the study of the classics, or to ignore the difficulties felt by those who have the best right to speak on such a subject. It may be that the change, if it is to be made at all, can only be made gradually, and that the Commissioners have done all that they could in insisting upon the study of other subjects, subordinate indeed to classics, but still to be followed as a necessary part of the recognized school course. It would be an immense gain, no doubt, if even this were done; it would be difficult to over-rate its vast importance; but we will venture, still, to put forward some considerations which induce us to believe that such a change cannot be final, and it would be in the interest of the highest education if other subjects were put in the place of classics as a principal study.

In the first place the amount of time given up to classics, even in the scheme proposed by the Commissioners, is out of all proportion to the amount of knowledge of them which it is desirable that boys should acquire, or likely that they will acquire. It is easy to teach them up to a certain point, and very difficult to go beyond that point. More time and more labour do not produce anything like proportional results. Now, if one-half, or rather more, of a boy's working hours, from nine to nineteen, is to be devoted to classics, that time can only be filled up, in the majority of cases, by spreading the work, intentionally, over a longer time than necessary, and taking ten years to do what might be done very well in two. Composition in

the dead languages may especially be regarded as a mere waste of time. The kind of excellence which is attainable in it can have only a fancy value. Like good china, it is curious in its place, but of no great use; while, for the vast majority of our young classical poets, the real parallel for their verses is not china at all, but some bad imitation of it, to be palmed off, if possible, upon the unwary. If composition, however, were wholly cut out of the *curriculum*, and boys were allowed to begin their classics at a later age than they do now, and after a proper training, which they do not now receive, in English, and French or German, they might acquire in two years, or, in cases of exceptional stupidity, in three, as much knowledge of Greek and Latin as they ever do now after ten or twelve years' study. The experience of Professors in the London 'Ladies' Colleges' may be adduced in our support. Young ladies who leave school at sixteen or seventeen, after an education proverbially defective in method and thoroughness, but who have practised something of English composition and have picked up some sort of knowledge of modern languages, do, if they are properly taught, learn Latin fairly in about the time we have stated as the maximum necessary for boys of ordinary capacity; and this though they pursue it by no means as a principal study, but only as sharing their attention with a variety of other subjects. Is it too much to suppose that boys could do the same, giving, as they would, more hours to Latin, and putting Greek in the place of some one or more of the other subjects which necessarily occupy a lady's time and attention? Those who could not had better resign mental cultivation to the other sex, and sacrifice to the graces instead with music and dancing and ornamental needlework.

The question of the teaching of the classics as a means of education seems, too, to be hardly fairly raised, if Greek



and Latin are always spoken of together, as they are in fact by the use of the word 'classics' at all. It appears to be thought that the reasons in favour of each of these are just the same; and that, if one is abandoned, the other must fall with it. Now this is far from being true. We do not believe that, under any changes, however sweeping, the study of Latin can be discontinued; at least, if education, and not merely professional training, is the object aimed at. Modern law and modern history cannot be learnt thoroughly without a good knowledge of Latin. There may be no good reason why Latin composition should be practised; there is abundance of reason why a boy should be taught to read a Latin author with facility. For the Middle Ages in particular, most of the original documents are inaccessible to any but the Latin scholar. Latin, too, is the key to many modern languages in a sense in which Greek is not, just as Roman jurisprudence and Roman history are the key to our own law and our own history, and to that of continental nations even more than to our own. The more closely modern history is studied, the more it will be seen that it is closely linked to Roman history; that feudal Europe grew necessarily from the state of things established during the empire; that the ecclesiastical system of the Middle Ages, its peculiar dogmas, and the more valuable part of its moral teaching, were in great part already developed before the close of the Western Empire, and partly, too, originated from Roman modes of thought, and from the circumstances of a situation which was of essentially Roman origin. There are different reasons—good reasons, perhaps—for the study of Greek, but it should never be forgotten that they are different. There is a perfection in the Greek language, and a divine perfection in Greek literature, which we do not find in Latin. Greek thought and Greek philosophy have been the immediate parents of

modern thought and modern philosophy. Greek civilization was, most properly, an aesthetic and an intellectual civilization. It would be scarcely possible to set too high a value on the works which it has left us—scarcely possible to feel too keen a regret for what we have lost. But we are separated by so wide a gulf from the social and political system of ancient Greece, that it can never be worth our while to study them in the same sense in which it is worth our while to study those of Rome. The thread of Greek history was too completely broken by the Macedonian and Roman conquests. Greek thought survived, but it was long before it was incorporated with modern thought. Greek art survived; but it admitted of no such incorporation. But Greek thought may be appreciated, imperfectly indeed, but perhaps sufficiently, without a knowledge of the Greek language; and in place of the perfect models of Greek art, we may employ in education the equally perfect models of mediæval and modern art. Homer and Pindar may be exchanged for Dante and Milton. We may learn to follow in the footsteps of Aristotle, though we have never read Aristotle. It will not be without loss that we shall cease to study Greek. The type of a civilization so distant and different from our own, has a peculiar value, as well as a peculiar charm, through that very distance and difference. The real question for us is whether we shall not attain more valuable results in education by devoting the same time and energy to other and more pressing subjects. There can be no danger that Greek will ever be neglected. Some will continue to study it, and will find their reward in doing so, but we venture to doubt whether, in a scheme of education for the present century, it should continue to be forced on all. We admit fully the necessity of Latin, but we do not think that an equal case can be made out for the necessity of Greek.

We need not say much on the study of physical science. Its absolute necessity as a part of education is fully recognized by the Commissioners, as indeed it is now by most sensible men. The only strong opinion which we find expressed against it is in the evidence of the headmaster of Winchester. The subject was forced upon the authorities of Winchester by the late Oxford Commissioners; the College undertook, with evident reluctance, to engage, from time to time, the best lecturers of the day, in the various branches of physical science, to come to Winchester and give the scholars successive courses of lectures, and has tried its best, since, to do as little as possible in the way of fulfilling its engagement. In fact only ten lectures were given in the course of a year, and these not regularly; and even when they were given, the attendance at them was not compulsory. The headmaster of Winchester, Dr. Moberly, when he was questioned by the Public Schools Commissioner as to the use which he conceived might be made of physical science as a part of the school *curriculum*, and its value as a discipline of the mind, just allowed that the entire subject was one which a gentleman would be the better for knowing, but added that 'compared with other things, a scientific fact, either as conveyed by a lecturer or as reproduced in examination, is a fact which produces nothing in a boy's mind. It is simply a barren fact, which he remembers or does not remember for a time, and which, after a few years, becomes confused with other facts, and is forgotten. It leads to nothing; it does not germinate; it is a perfectly unfruitful fact.' A good deal more of the same kind follows this bit of evidence. Even 'what you call "principles"' fall under a similar condemnation, and physical science is dismissed altogether as a subject not devoid of some interest for a man in his idler hours, but quite undeserving serious

attention, unless, indeed, it has to be studied professionally<sup>1</sup>.

Now if any proof were required of the imperative need there is to force this subject upon our school authorities, and of the kind of difficulties which will inevitably be opposed to its admission, it might be found in the fact that a gentleman of some mental culture, earnest in the cause of what he deems education, and who has fulfilled, not unworthily, for about twenty-nine years, the kind of duties which a headmaster of Winchester is expected to fulfil, can be found to give expression to such views as the above on the subject of the physical sciences; in the fact that he can ignore all that those sciences have done already, and promise to do, in dispelling illusions and supplying forms of thought, even to those who most steadily resist their influence, and can think it of more importance that his boys should learn by heart seven thousand lines or so of the classics each half-year, than that they should be made familiar with the results of modern thought, and be trained to think, as the world around them is learning to think, about subjects divine and human. He might answer, it is true, that it is no duty of his to dispel illusions, but to encourage them, and that modes of thought which seem to foreshadow the speedy coming of Antichrist are things which the youthful mind had far better be untrained in. But, in truth, he does not ask even this excuse for his neglect. His complaint of science is, not that it does harm to the mind, but that it does nothing; not that it teaches boys to think erroneously, but that it does not really teach them to think at all. He would view a chemical experiment with the same kind of interest as a conjuring trick of the Wizard of the North, and be well contented to limit his acquaintance with physiology to the 'scientific facts' of

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. pp. 344, 345.

Wombwell's Menagerie or the eloquence of Barnum's showman. If more than this were needed in the way of subjects of which 'no highly-educated gentleman should be entirely ignorant,' it might be found in the true story of the whale by which Jonah was swallowed, or of the ass that could talk Hebrew. His evidence deserves attention, because we are too apt to forget that there are such men living still among us, and it is well to know the kind of opposition in high quarters which every movement of reform will have to count upon.

We must add, however, that a portion of the blame must be allowed to rest on scientific men themselves. They are too apt to regard the one science they profess as complete in itself, and to ignore its relations and its place in a rational system of the sciences. Chemists, for example, press forward into ground which belongs really to the biologist; and biologists, in their turn, attempt to explain facts which admit of no explanation until history is called in to aid. The most ardent advocates of the cause of physical science are too often compelled to allow and to lament that it has fallen into the hands of men incompetent to teach it to any good purpose—of men who are as much inferior to classical scholars in mental power, as they are superior to them in the accident of their subject. This is one among the many practical difficulties in the way of change which it is useless to ignore, or to regard as other than very serious. We shall be compelled to return to it, and to state the only kind of remedy of which it seems to us to admit, when we consider more at length the various obstacles which we must be prepared to meet in an attempt to introduce a new system of education into our great public schools.

Perhaps the strongest arguments in favour of the classical system have been that it introduces us to a great period of history which we might pass over without due

attention, if we were not taught Greek and Latin. It has no doubt been of immense value in this way. It is a fact of no little significance that the Middle Ages closed with the Renaissance, the causes that brought it into being having already sapped and overthrown Catholicism. At a time when a doctrine, absolute in its claims and yet merely provisional, was taught and accepted as absolute and final over the whole of Western Europe, at a time when it appeared to furnish a sufficient clue to human life and man's past history, and seemed adequate to guide and superintend the course of his whole future development, its influence was shaken, and the high position it had asserted for itself was doubted and finally disallowed, through the combined operation indeed of a great variety of causes, but not least because Western Europe had been brought face to face with two great worlds to which Catholicism was unknown, each with its own independent history and independent civilization—the Mahometan world of the present, and the old world of classical antiquity. Greek philosophy, as expounded by Aquinas, had been, it is true, the humble servant of Catholicism, but in the hands of Averroes and Avicenna it became its strongest and most deadly foe. The Church of the Middle Ages had played its rôle, and had passed away already, before Luther appeared on the stage, to revive, among the least educated people of Europe, a portion of a doctrine which was elsewhere wholly discredited. The causes of the overthrow of Catholicism may be found in the Renaissance far more truly than in the Reformation.

Now it is obvious that for that time, and for the centuries which immediately followed, the history of the Middle Ages could furnish no proper object for study. There were many ready to do battle in favour of Catholicism; there were many to do battle against it; there were many, too, to whom Catholicism and its fanatical assailants were

alike objects of indifference or of disgust ; but the time had not arrived when men could judge calmly of the real service which Catholicism had rendered in the past, and could do it full justice without being in the least likely to believe any of its doctrines. The time had not arrived then, but we believe that it has arrived now ; we believe that, although we can never neglect the history of the older world, yet for us there is a teaching of greater value in the history of the Middle Ages. It may become to us what the histories of Greece and Rome have been to our forefathers—a history so closely linked to our own that we may learn from it best our own relations to the past and to one another, and yet so removed from us by the lapse of time and the change of circumstances, that we shall be in danger of no delusion as to the kind of guidance that it is really adequate to supply. We believe, in a word, that the history of those ages, and of the links which connect them with the present, has a claim upon our principal attention which is superior to any other ; and that all history, whether classical or not, taught in our schools, should be subservient to this, and should be used chiefly to assist in its better and more complete elucidation.

We should find, too, in this kind of study, a deficiency supplied which has been long complained of in an education chiefly classical. The advocates of such a system are often eloquent in its praises as affording the best means for the development of the intellectual faculties and for the acquisition of literary power, as though such a development and such an acquisition were the highest object that any education could attain. We do not believe that even for these it is the best means possible, but, even if it were so, it leaves unattempted the higher object of qualifying a man for citizenship in a state which is itself an integral part of the commonwealth of Western Europe.

The knowledge upon which the sense of such a citizenship depends, the feelings which should accompany it, the habitual frame of mind which it implies, must be acquired and trained in youth, or the sense itself will suffer for the omission, as in the vast majority of cases it does suffer, if indeed it is ever subsequently developed. The events of Greek, and even of Roman history, need something to connect them with our own before we can learn from them the lessons which they really contain. They are too distant from us, too wholly different; as they are ordinarily taught, they might be, for all we feel to the contrary, the record of the fortunes of another race, situated in another planet. It would not be easy to find a graver charge against our present system of education than is implied in the acknowledged fact that it leaves the judgement untrained on the highest social and political questions, and does not fit a man, but rather unfits him, to feel his position and to discharge his duty as an Englishman and a European.

We should say then, in reply to the reasons which the Commissioners have urged for making classics the principal subject of study in our public schools, that although the study of language and literature is of the highest importance as supplementing the deficiencies of a merely scientific training, it need by no means be concluded that Greece and Rome must furnish us with the best and most useful models for either one or the other. In the vast majority of cases a boy's education is over as soon as he has left school, and though it is true that he may never make himself acquainted with Greek and Latin if he has not learned them earlier, yet the deficiency will be more serious if he has learned them and has learned little else, and forgets, as he soon will do, even them, when his attention is fully occupied with the calls of his profession or his business. A principal 'subject,' too, should not be



determined on by a somewhat arbitrary selection of one subject from among many, and by afterwards making up for its defects as an educational instrument by tacking on to it three or four other subjects, to be pursued quite independently. Such a plan as this could have no other effect than to hinder a boy's mind from ever attaining a conception of the unity of all knowledge. The boy's attention would be distracted by the multitude of unconnected details thus forced upon him, and the man who had grown up under such a system would be likely to go on to the end of his life, furnished perhaps with a good amount of multifarious information, but having never, in the highest sense of the word, learned anything, and with little enough prospect of ever doing so now. For a principal subject to have any right to its place, it must be shown in its behalf that it can form a real centre about which can be arranged all else that will have to be taught beside it, and while this claim has never even been asserted in favour of Greek and Latin, it will be admitted without hesitation in favour of history, to which Greek and Latin themselves may hold a fair rank as subordinates. We have already stated our reasons why early modern history should at present be preferred to any other, but its study might be supplemented, without any loss of unity, by Greek and Roman history on the one hand, and by later modern history on the other. Language, and literature in all its forms, might be pursued to any extent as a part strictly of the same plan, and so might the physical sciences, and they would gain and not lose in importance by being treated thus historically. Every good result that could follow from the study of many isolated subjects would follow from the study of one subject around which the others could be grouped as accessories, and there would be the further advantage, of quite incalculable value, that the mind of the learner would

be trained as soon as possible to stand above and not below the mass of information which it would receive, and would acquire the habit of viewing everything in strict relation to the one subject of highest human interest—the progress of the human race. And it would be likely, too, that such a principle of unity would retain a firm hold upon the mind that had once admitted it, for it would address itself to the affections not less than to the judgment, and might exert, therefore, a continued influence, even when the professed work of education was supposed to be finished and over. The man would continue ever better to appreciate the lessons which the boy had learned, and would be furnished with rational forms for thought and rational objects for feeling. He would have gained, from his early training, all the advantage which the knowledge of many things can offer, and more than all the power which the present system proposes as its single aim. It would not of course be every mind that could reap the full benefit of such a method ; there would be a more and a less in the results attained by it, but all might learn something which they would value. Special knowledge would be as well gained as ever by those who were unable to master the simplest philosophical views, while the pariahs of the intellectual world could do their ‘anything else,’ as they do now at Eton ; they could ‘row, or play cricket or any other athletic game,’ with no worse interruptions than they are exposed to from Latin and Greek.

But we should not conceal from ourselves that there are difficulties in the way of any change in our educational system which appear at present almost insuperable. It is better to face them fairly. The fact that such difficulties exist need not alter our views as to what is desirable ; it may make us aware that something far less is alone possible. The classical system has the advantage of

possession, supported by a long and almost undisputed title. Some hours it has been compelled to surrender for the pursuit of other subjects, but its supremacy is still unshaken. Classics, taught as they are taught in our public schools, are the recognized means by which the faculties are to be trained and disciplined. They are almost the first thing which the boy learns at school; they are almost the only thing which the man learns at College<sup>1</sup>. There is a well-established standard for them, by which knowledge can be fairly measured and ignorance infallibly detected and exposed. The system of instruction is, at least in theory, pretty well complete. The student knows what to read and what to avoid, and how to set about his work, with a certainty of the best possible result. There is nothing actually ready to step in and take the place which classics occupy. There is no trained body of teachers, fit for their work, in sufficient numbers to undertake it. The regular prizes for success are almost monopolized by classics, and there is a tradition and a strong prejudice in their favour, powerful alike with boys and masters. A thorough change would be certain, for a time, to work at best indifferently; it would fail in just the very points in which the classical system most

<sup>1</sup> These and other similar remarks apply more necessarily to the Oxford than to the Cambridge system. At Cambridge, mathematics have been long recognized as a subject for which the highest honours are given, and by which fellowships and other prizes of the kind are to be reached. But it is pretty generally recognized that the Cambridge course is more narrow than the Oxford, and far more unphilosophical in its aim and its results. The dread of being compelled to adopt so poor a substitute is one among many reasons why men still cling to classics. Even at Cambridge, however, a large number of honour men, and all the pass-men, devote their chief attention to classics in their most meagre and most useless form, with little or no reference to the history and philosophy which may be joined with them. So much it is necessary to state, to prevent the possible misapprehension that, while pointing out defects in Oxford, we have any thought of proposing Cambridge as a model.

eminently succeeds. And lastly, there is a vast body of men who have a kind of vested right to live by teaching, and who can teach nothing but classics.

These difficulties are real and formidable ; they stand in the way of change, and must be overcome if any change is to be successful. There is one power alone which can supply the stimulus necessary to overcome them—the power of public opinion. If this were on the side of real reform, the way to effect it would very soon be found. But public opinion, in its present state, is by no means opposed to the present system. It is not strongly in favour of it ; there is a sort of lazy acquiescence in the traditions of our great public schools that is spread pretty widely through the English middle classes. They wish their boys to be taught classics ; they do not know why, except that such is the recognized education of gentlemen, and such the education necessary for success at the University. In the present state, therefore, of the public mind, it is useless to hope that the course of change will be rapid. We shall be well contented if some small part of the Commissioners' recommendations is forced upon our schools by Parliament. There will certainly be a decent show of doing something. The state of things revealed in the evidence before us as to the practical working of the schools is too flagrant an abuse to be passed over. The middle classes will not wish their sons to be trained at Eton in habits of time-honoured idleness, or to have the intervals of bullying filled up by menial services at Westminster. It is likely, too, that a more efficient use will be found for endowments which have been chiefly employed in keeping a useless or mischievous body of men in the enjoyment of unearned luxuries. It is vain to conjecture about the possible action of Parliament in the coming session. The tone adopted by the press, and by our public men, does not lead us to hope

for much. The upper classes are indifferent about education; they do not feel it, at present, as a real and pressing danger. The classical system is at least safe and harmless. If a real attempt is made to substitute for classics a sounder and better system, they will be indifferent no longer, but will take their place, of course, as its natural and most bitter enemies.

## VI.

PAUL LOUIS COURIER.

‘DÉTOURNEZ ce calice. Remove this cup from me. The hemlock is bitter, and the world is converted well enough by itself, without my interfering with it, poor creature that I am.’

These are the words, almost the last words, of Paul Louis Courier. They are written in answer to the exhortation of an enthusiastic friend, who bade him go forth and preach to the world, and pay the price of doing so, as St. Paul had paid it, as Socrates had paid it, as every great teacher in every age of history has paid it, by bitter persecution, by rousing a hatred against himself that might perhaps crush him, but could not help aiding him by its opposition. This style is more serious than Courier usually employs. A perfect master of irony, he commonly prefers the use of the weapon with which he most excelled ; and to us, who know how soon his own death was to follow—how soon he was to drink of the cup which he would fain have put from him, such words may well seem to have a sense almost prophetic, saddened and restrained by the foresight, if such were possible, of an end which his admirers have the right to consider as a martyrdom.

When Courier spoke of persecution, and expressed his

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres Complètes de P. L. Courier, précédées d'un Essai sur la Vie et les Ecrits de l'Auteur*, by Armand Carrel. Paris : Didot Frères. 1861.

hope of avoiding it, he spoke of what he had himself known, and of what he had not always aimed at avoiding. We may be in doubt, perhaps, what gospel his friend would have had him preach, and in what way he could hope that it would benefit his fellow-creatures; we may be sure, at least, that he was ever ready to risk his own personal safety in the cause of the oppressed and helpless, and that a great part of his later life was devoted to the utterance of that from which he could gain nothing whatever, but which kept him constantly embroiled with the French Government, and rendered him the object of a very ignoble but a very dangerous persecution. Courier was not cast in the saintly type—very far from it—nor in the heroic type, though he had many of the qualities of a hero. The pleasures of his later days were few and simple, chiefly literary and domestic; and he would have been satisfied if he had been left quietly to enjoy life in his own way, and if he had seen those around him sharing the same privilege. It was because he did not see this—it was because he saw them, on the contrary, harassed by a thousand petty annoyances, and prohibited from a thousand innocent enjoyments, that he took up arms in their behalf rather than in his own, and used with such terrible effect a weapon which no other could wield as he could—a literary style in which he was absolutely without a rival. It was in this that Courier was a hero—in that he was able to feel as strong an indignation at the wrongs of others as at his own; and in that he could not bear to allow any wrong to pass unnoticed which he had it in his power to expose, and so to remedy. And in doing this he did not count the cost; he accepted the sacrifice it involved, so only that he could accomplish the work he aimed at. Whether or not we allow him the title of a hero, we must allow that he possessed that without which neither saintliness nor heroism can be of any great importance; and

that the first requisite for all nobility of character consists in the power of identifying, as he did, the interests of others with one's own.

Courier was born at Paris in 1773. His education was not at first very systematic ; but he acquired in the course of it a taste, which never left him, for the best models of ancient literature, and the best expressions of ancient thought and feeling. These were his first choice, and he never abandoned them. When he came afterwards to the study of the exact sciences, he came to it with a mind already occupied with other matters, and he could never bring himself to study them with any ardour. He would have exchanged, he said, all the truths of Euclid for one page of Isocrates. At the commencement of the great Revolution, Courier was still a boy ; and the events and need of the Revolution determined his first choice of a career. In 1792 he went to the military school at Châlons ; and he was sent, in the year following, to the frontiers, as an officer of artillery. His life as a soldier lasted for fifteen years ; but from first to last he had no love for what he termed his 'vile profession,' and he was engaged throughout in studies of a kind more congenial to him than the ordinary soldier's duties. He found it useful afterwards to be able to claim a place as one of the early heroes of the Revolution, as one of the defenders of his country's frontiers during the season of the great invasions. Such antecedents, after the return of the Bourbons, however little likely to recommend him to the Government, at least secured him a favourable hearing from the people, to whom his pamphlets were addressed. But his early life and career, if they had been examined strictly, would scarcely have justified his assumption.

It was, as we have said, in 1793 that Courier began his career as a soldier. It was an era, then, of no common enthusiasm. The Revolution was still in the full fervour



of its youth, and elated with its early triumphs ; and its soldiers, in addition to the ordinary motives of a military career, felt themselves fighting in the vanguard of human progress—the champions not of France only, but of humanity. But whatever sentiment of the moment may have led Courier to the choice of his profession, it was not with much ardour that he now followed it. He was no coward ; he was ready enough to risk his life in the excitement of battle. But his letters show him to us little interested in the course of events, little anxious for the kind of distinction that he had it in his power to achieve. He was a soldier by profession and by necessity, but by taste a scholar and an antiquarian. For two years he continued to discharge such duties as were assigned to him, careless equally about advancement and glory. In the third year he left the army, and came home, without leave, as a deserter. The siege of Mayence was in progress, the cold was excessive, the sufferings of the army intolerable ; and further, Courier had just received news of his father's death. He accordingly quitted his post, having, as he tells us, just escaped being quite frozen to death, and returned home to his family. He was, of course, reclaimed as a deserter ; and though his friends made interest for him sufficient to shelter him from the extreme punishment to which he was liable, yet for three years he was in disgrace, occupied with routine duties in the interior, and was not allowed to share the triumphs of the French arms in Italy.

But his time, during this forced retirement, was passed in a way he liked far better than he liked the life of a soldier. He was a scholar, and he had now abundant leisure for reading ; and he was young and fond of pleasure, and for that too he found abundant opportunity. The Convention was now ended, and with it the seriousness and earnestness of the early Revolution. A gayer period had come in with the Directory ; and Courier,

young and full of life and spirits, surrendered himself easily to the *abandon* of the moment, and found himself the universal favourite of a society whose one aim it had become to give and to receive pleasure. The power of sharing and intensely appreciating such a mode of life was an essential part of Courier's nature. To the last it had never left him, though the objects in which he sought for pleasure continually varied. His noblest and most serious pursuits were engaged in rather as the gratification of a whim than as the discharge of a grave duty. He was distinguished from other men, not by more energy of will, but by greater powers of performance.

In 1798 Courier was again employed in active service; and for ten more years his duties, distasteful as they were to him, were continued. He was fearless of personal danger, but the monotony of a soldier's life was annoying to him; and further, he was too indifferent to the course of events to care very much which side conquered, so unable was he to identify himself with one to the exclusion of all sympathy with the opposite; and in this temper he now went to Italy, rather to deplore the ravages of his country's arms, than with any wish to contribute to his country's triumphs. A good soldier, more even than a good theologian, should be very narrow in his views of man and of society, and should be able to believe with all his soul that his enemies are wholly in the wrong and that the cause he is contending for is the only just one. For the sword is a very tangible reality, and the consequences of its use seem to need some justification. The invectives of a theologian are perhaps felt, even by himself, to be less dangerous to those at whom they are directed.

In 1808 Courier resigned his commission and left the army; but his career as a soldier was not yet quite ended. The year that followed his resignation was one for France of vast military effort. The impulse of war spread itself

through all the country. The preparations made were immense, and Bonaparte, lately triumphant in Spain, was himself to command the armies destined for the conquest of Vienna. Courier was impelled by the prevailing enthusiasm. The thought of serving under Bonaparte inflamed his imagination, and excited, even in him, the thirst for military glory. But his late resignation was a matter which could not be overlooked, and he was obliged to join the army without a commission and with no definite duties assigned to him. His ardour to be present at the scene of action was not very long-lived; his 'quarter of an hour of folly' was soon ended. He saw war now as he had never before seen it, on a scale which reduced the actions of individuals to insignificance, and accompanied by a slaughter greater than is usual even in the vastest military operations. The horrors of such a war were intolerable to him. The two fearful days on the island of Lobau, and the movements of troops which preceded Wagram, were the last scenes of the kind at which he was present. He left the army for ever, and retired once more to literature and to his favourite Italy. His illusions were ended, and his life henceforth is purely that of a civilian.

During the remaining years of the Empire, Courier lived in retirement, travelled a good deal, and attracted occasional notice by a very clever letter or pamphlet. He married about the close of 1814, and fixed his abode in France, in the neighbourhood of Tours, where he followed a country life, careless of the political changes which were now in such constant progress. His chief fame is based upon what he wrote after the second restoration of the Bourbons. It is time, therefore, to say something of the manner and purpose of his writings, of the principles he wished to put forward, and of the occasions which incited him to publish them.

Courier does not seem to have had any fixed opinions in politics. On such matters he was always, as he tells us himself, on the side of the last speaker. He loved personal liberty for himself and for others, and was indignant with his whole soul against political persecution, as he was against religious persecution. But as to the kind of rule under which liberty was enjoyed—to that he was profoundly indifferent. If the advantages of a republic were pointed out to him, and it was proved that liberty could be secured under a republic, he felt himself, for the moment, republican. The next moment he would range himself, just as readily, on the side of monarchy, provided always that liberty were not to be endangered by it; and would hold to his new opinions with as little tenacity as to his old ones. He was quite willing to leave to fools the contest about forms of government; to him 'that which was best administered was best,' and that was best administered which secured its subjects or citizens the largest measure possible of freedom in thought, in expression, and in action. His religious creed it is less easy to determine. The hatred and contempt he expressed for Catholic priests and for Catholicism depended largely no doubt on the peculiar state of France at the time he wrote. Catholicism was dominant under the Bourbons. It had become a persecuting faith, and was taking revenge, as well as it could, for the Revolution which had flung it down. And it was administered by men of a type with which Courier had little sympathy. Young *curés* from the seminary, burning to advance a cause which was their own, fanatical in their religious zeal and their strictness about the morality of others, careless enough about their own, for they were men and celibates, gaining an influence by the confessional which was always fatal to family independence, and was frequently abused for purposes far worse than a merely spiritual despotism—

such were the priests whom Courier saw about him in the provinces, such was the *cagoterie* which his pamphlets so unsparingly exposed. He speaks with affection of a race of priests which he had known and which was fast dying out; men beloved by their people, sharing their simple country life, joining harmlessly in their country sports, and making it the object of their lives to do good to others. He did not share their faith; but he could appreciate and do justice to their goodness.

Courier has left on record a statement of his faith, if we may call it so; it is a statement at least of his principles. He calls it so himself. He had applied to be admitted as a member of the Académie des Inscriptions, of which his brother-in-law, M. Clavier, had been a member for many years. His claims for such a distinction were very high. He was well known as a good Greek scholar; he had published several translations from the Greek, and he had passed many years of his life in the particular studies which it was the object of the Academy to promote. These claims, however, were unanimously rejected, and certain gentlemen were elected as members, of whom it was said, 'They do not indeed know any Greek, but their principles are known to us.' This Courier professes to have felt as a blow aimed at himself; it was an insinuation that *his* principles were not known, that he was a man without principles. And he takes occasion, in order to prevent the subject being further discussed, to state his own principles, in the course of a letter to the members of the Academy which had rejected him. He begins with some statements which remind us of Molière's Don Juan; he puts forward some simple axioms of mathematics. These are his principles. As for the more difficult ones, such as 'that two and two make four,' he holds them indeed, but he is not sure of them. But there are different principles in different subjects. There are principles of

grammar, for example ; but on them he need not touch. The gentlemen with whom he is comparing himself know neither Greek nor Latin. So he passes on to speak with the same sincerity on religion, and morals, and politics. Of his religion, he says, mockingly, that his principles are the same as those of his nurse, who died a Christian and a Catholic, quite unsuspected of heresy. He is himself only a soldier and a woodcutter, and therefore orthodox, as men of his station in life ought to be. Of his morals he speaks more seriously. His one principle is to do nothing to another which he would not wish another to do to him. For his political principles he wishes to say little. He is afraid of being misunderstood, for the terms of a political creed are not very fixed, and he might be confounded with persons who wholly differ from him. One thing only he will say. He does not wish to be made king, and he is taking no steps to become so—a rare quality in the present age, and one which marks him off from all parties whatever.

If we interpret all this by the light which we may gain from Courier's life, and Courier's other writings, we shall find it expresses truly enough what he really thought and practised. He did not wish to meddle in politics, or to ally himself with any party, caring as he did only for results, and indifferent about forms of government. On matters of religion he was probably a positive thinker, but very tolerant to those who differed from him, provided always that they in their turn were tolerant to others. And he was a thoroughly good man, ready at all times to fight the battles of the weak who had no other supporter, and exposing himself to serious risks as their champion ; and willing to suffer a real persecution himself rather than allow others to be persecuted, if his terrible pen could be of any aid to them. Such was the real man who now came forward as a pamphleteer ; but with a perfect literary

art, and a style which France had not known since Fénelon and La Fontaine and Voltaire.

The character in which he presented himself was a singular one. Paul Louis, Vigneron, is his favourite signature. He speaks and writes as a simple, honest countryman, living by the work of his hands on his little patrimony by the Loire, and using the language of common life, and common sense, to ordinary men like himself. He takes pleasure, too, now in speaking of himself as an old soldier of the Empire, and particularly in recalling his early services in the army which had beaten back the invaders from the French frontiers. We know what his services were, and the kind of distinction he succeeded in winning for himself as a soldier, and we should not probably rank them very high ; but the character he assumed was a popular one, and his antecedents were not very strictly inquired into. His literary pursuits, he wished it to be understood, were the amusement of his leisure hours. He had been a soldier; he was now a vine-dresser, and he had neither time nor taste for letters. There was a matter now and then on which he wished to address others, but when these occurred his language was not that of the Court, but of the country. His readers were to think of him as an old soldier, living on his farm, and writing, as other men might write, a plain statement of facts, or of the sentiments of everyday life. The art with which this was done was as perfect as that of the *Drapier's Letters*, the language and the moral purpose were far higher.

During the years that had passed since his retirement from the army, his reputation as a writer had deservedly made great progress. In his own style he was without a rival, and his style was not an easy one to employ successfully. 'Men talk,' he says, 'of writing common sense as the best way of getting a hearing, as if common sense

were so ordinary a gift, or so easy to put on paper.' The best testimony to its difficulty is the fact that so few have succeeded in writing it. But how much more difficult to conceal the perfection of art under an affectation of mere common sense ; to put the language of Demosthenes into the mouth of a vine-dresser, and to exhaust every artifice of literature without departing for a moment from the language of common life. The power to do this is the rarest of literary gifts, and Courier had it in perfection. His writings had already shown it ; but all that he had hitherto written was thrown into the shade by a short pamphlet on a proposal by the Minister of the Interior to raise a national subscription for the purchase of Chambord for the infant Duke of Bordeaux. The pamphlet appeared under the title of *Simple Discours de Paul Louis, Vigneron*, and before long it had gained such a reputation as to embroil its author very seriously with the Government.

If we had money (he commences) that we did not know what to do with, if all our debts were paid, our roads repaired, our poor relieved, &c., I think, my friends, that it would be right to subscribe with our neighbours to rebuild the bridge of St. Avertin, which would considerably shorten the distance between us and Tours, and so improve the value and the produce of land in all these quarters. This is, I think, the best way in which we could employ our useless money, when we had any. But to buy Chambord for the Duke of Bordeaux, I am not in favour of that, and I should not wish it if we had the means of doing it, the matter being, as I think, bad for him, for us, and for Chambord. For the courtiers it would be, no doubt, the best thing possible. They have good reason to wish for it. But not for the prince. He would gain our money, but he would lose a hundred-fold our love ; and though the bargain seems a golden one, though we pay and he only takes, yet Chambord, so acquired, would cost him too dear. Princes are rich only in the love of their subjects. It is not his friends who are advising this course, but rather some clever enemy.

And who is it, I ask, who has given this wonderful advice ? 'The idea has been suggested,' says the minister. Suggested by whom ? Not by the minister ; he would have let us know if it had been so ; he would not have been content with the honour of approving it. Is



it the prince? God forbid that this should have been the earliest thought of his life—that such a wish should have occurred to him before he has learned to wish for toys and *bon-bons*. The *communes* then? Not ours, certainly, on this side of the Loire; but those perhaps which have twice quartered the Cossacks of the Don. Here we feel but little the benefits of the Holy Alliance, but there they have enjoyed it fully; they have had Sacken and Platow among them, and naturally *their* first thought is to purchase castles for their princes; when they have done this, they will repair their houses afterwards.

Well, the idea has been suggested, whoever was its author, and our business is not with the credit of the suggestion, but with paying for carrying it out. 'Sir, all is yours,' is the language of the courtiers to their sovereign; but they give all to their King, just as the priests give all to God. The civil list and the royal domain no more belong to the King than the revenue of the abbeys does to Jesus Christ. Buy Chambord, and make a present of it. The court will devour it. The prince will be no better and no worse off than before. These fine ideas of making us pay come always from the courtiers. They know what they are doing when they offer the prince our money.

If the question, now, had been about our subscribing to send the Duke to college, I would have consented willingly, and voted whatever was asked, if it had cost me my best crop of clover. The eldest son of the Duke of Orleans is there—a new thing for persons of rank. There is no favouritism there, and no flattery. Things are called by their true names. There is no one to tell a young prince that all belongs to him. He must take his place with the rest, and learn what they learn, and contend with them for the same prizes. We should have no *dragonnades*, no St. Bartholomew Massacres, if princes were thus brought up.

But at Chambord what would he learn? He would have his ancestors there as his models, and I prefer that he should live with us rather than with his ancestors. On all sides he will see portraits of royal mistresses, and there will be plenty of persons to tell him what they mean. There Louis, the model of all kings, lived (such is the court phrase) with Madame Montespan, with Mademoiselle La Vallière, with all the married women and maids whom it was his good pleasure to take away from their husbands and their relations. It was the time then of morals and of religion, and he took the Holy Communion every day. By this door his mistress entered in the evening, and in the morning his confessor. Hither came a girl to ask her father's life, and she paid the price for it, and obtained it from Francis, who died here of his good morals. These are the lessons which the young prince would learn at Chambord.

The duke then can gain nothing from Chambord; but for us, who

are to pay for it, how does the matter stand for us? We shall have more than one evil to endure, and not least of them, the near neighbourhood of the court. Let us give the great their due, but let us keep ourselves as far from them as we can, and take care, too, that they keep themselves far from us. They *can* hurt us, but they can do us no good. You know how they behave to us, and what good neighbours they are. If they are young, they hunt over our wheat, make gaps in our hedges, spoil our ditches, do us harm in a thousand ways. And if you make any complaint about it, if you go to the magistrate for redress—you shall tell me your success when you have come out of prison. If they are old, the case is still worse. They bring actions against us, ruin us by process of law, and sentence is pronounced by *gentlemen*, who dine with them, men of worth as they are, incapable of eating meat on a Friday, or of missing mass; and these men think that they are doing a good act in adjudging your property to the nobles—that they are reconstituting the *ancien régime*. If the presence of one of these men is more than you can tolerate, if one of them can make you leave your district, how would it be if you had a court at Chambord, all the great together in a body around one greater than themselves. There are inconveniences, my friends, in the near neighbourhood of a court. To live there, a man should be either a servant or a beggar.

You would become both before long. Living near them, you would soon learn the ways of those about them. Everybody at court is a servant, or wishes to be one. And begging is no shame at court; it is the life of a courtier. He watches the proper time for it, as you do the time for sowing your harvest, aye, and better. He never loses courage. If we had half his constancy in our work, our granaries could never hold our crops. No insult, no outrage can repel him. *Strike if you will, but listen to me*, and give me something. There is no service too vile for him. The man is yet to be found who can invent one that a courtier would, I do not say refuse, but one that he would not consider a glory and a sign of his devotedness. And a nice example all this would be for you, and for your sons and daughters.

Now try a little to imagine what the court is. It is an honest place, if you will, but is a strange place nevertheless. I do not know much about the court of the present day, but I know—who does not know?—the court of the great Louis Quatorze, the model of all courts, the court *par excellence*. There are curious facts about it, men's way there of living with their wives, for example. Every woman there was the wife of one man and the mistress of all, and stories abound that prove it to us. There was a community established, that marriages and other arrangements did not interfere with.

You find it impossible, my friends, to believe in such a life as this.

No single family, you think, could exist with it, and what must it be where it is the life of all families? Well, you are right. It would ruin your families, but not theirs. They depend, not as yours do on the husband's industry, but on the wife's favours. It has been women who have founded all our great houses; not, as you may suppose, by making their husbands' shirts or nursing their children. An honest woman is a treasure in our families; but what could a courtier do with one? Poor fellow! he would see favours showered all around him, and would get nothing himself. In a word, just as for us low-born fellows there is only one road to fortune, work; so there is only one for the nobility, *et c'est—c'est la prostitution, puisqu'il faut, mes amis, l'appeler par son nom*. And when our children have found out this, when they have found the way of getting rich without labour, would they be contented then to live as they do now? Thanks to the kindness of heaven, we have no court near us; and we, who are removed from this pollution, are we to pay to have one at our door? God forbid.

Such is the subject of some portion of this remarkable 'discourse.' We have done but partial justice to the matter; the style of it is inimitable. It was soon followed by a *Petition to the Chamber of Deputies for Villagers who were not allowed to Dance*,—a lighter and less elaborate pamphlet, but full of the same language about courts and princes, and very contemptuous towards the clergy, by whose agency the said prohibition had been obtained. Courier was called by the Government to account for both these publications, but first and principally for the *Simple Discours*. He has himself left us a long account of the course of his trial, the 'Procès de Paul Louis Courier,' and of the speech which he would have made in his own defence, if his friends had permitted him. To those who read the matter of the accusation, the answers of the accused, and the speeches of the advocates on either side, the defence appears abundantly established, or rather it is difficult to find in what the legal offence can have consisted. But the court and courtiers were furious at the satire; the president was the creature of the court; the jury were sensible middle-class Frenchmen, worthy

men, and at about the same level of intelligence as sensible middle-class Englishmen. Courier was brought in guilty of offending public morality, and was condemned to a fine of two hundred francs, and two months' imprisonment.

The rest of Courier's writings were, however, directed mainly to the same objects as the *Discours*. Among them we may mention, as deserving especial notice, the *Petition pour les Villageois que l'on empêche de danser*, and the *Réponse aux Lettres Anonymes adressées à Paul Louis Courier*. We find throughout the same hatred of tyrannical restrictions, the same opposition to the clergy as a party dominant in the State, the same love of liberty and sympathy with natural and innocent pleasures, the same chivalrous eagerness to defend those who were unable to defend themselves, and had no other helper, and above all, the same genuine kindness of heart and of purpose, which we find in almost every page that he has written. But the second series of the *Réponses aux Lettres Anonymes* rises above all that had gone before it. It reaches even to the 'grand style'; it is eloquence of the first order. The subject of it is mainly the consequences in France of the confessional, and of the enforced celibacy of the clergy.

Our space does not permit us to go more fully into these and into others of Courier's writings. But we must mention at least the titles of the *Gazette du Village*, in part humorous, in part, too, fearfully tragical; of the *Pièce Diplomatique*, supposed to be an intercepted letter from Louis XVIII to his Catholic Majesty the King of Spain; and lastly, of the *Pamphlet des Pamphlets*, the best of Courier's writings, from which the passage is taken with which our article is headed. He had already written the remarkable, and almost prophetic words—the warning he had received from a friend during his morning's walk in the Palais Royal: 'Prends garde, Paul Louis, prends

garde! Les cagots te feront assassiner.' The *livret* which contains this passage was published in 1823. On April 10, 1825, Courier was fired at a few steps from his own door, and was taken up dead. The author and the motive of the deed remain still alike unknown<sup>1</sup>.

Courier is gone. Cut off, as he was, in his fiftieth year, and in the full vigour of his powers, he yet left his work already done, his services to mankind already fully rendered. For these, persecuted in his life, he has received after his death the gratitude and honour he has deserved. His style is comparatively a small matter; but for that alone, as a most perfect literary model, he would be as immortal as the language in which he wrote. The friend of the oppressed, the enemy of all oppressors; the fearless champion of political and religious freedom, looking ever forward with faith and hope to the coming destinies of the world, and to the fuller enlightenment and fuller liberty of the future—these are his best titles to immortality; by these he has earned a name that must live for ever in the grateful memory of posterity, in whose destinies he had confidence—of mankind, whom it was his object to benefit. A longer life might have enabled him to do more for others; it could have added nothing to his reputation, which is secure for ever, based upon the possession of the highest powers, consecrated to the noblest of all aims—to the service of humanity.

<sup>1</sup> It is now accepted, on the criminal's own subsequent confession, that the murderer was Courier's gamekeeper.

## VII.

### THOUGHTS ON HOMER<sup>1</sup>.

THE earlier history of Homer has been, and remains still, a matter of great dispute. It is certain, however, that if the date at which the Homeric poems were composed was as early as that generally attributed to them (i. e. circa 950 B. c.), they were composed at a time when they could not have been preserved in writing, and must therefore have been handed down by the rhapsodists. Now these rhapsodists were themselves poets as well as reciters of poetry—they would have been ill fitted for their function else ; their object was not to preserve any author intact, but simply to recite passages of verse which would give their hearers pleasure. Is it necessary to say more in proof of the incomplete, the fragmentary, the varying, forms in which poems, so preserved, must have come down to a later age, and of the necessity which must have existed for (at least) some entire revision, before a consistent Homeric tradition could have been created or revived ?

Or again, if a considerably later date is to be assigned to their composition, the author in that case cannot have written independently of the materials already existing to his hands, and traditional. From whatever point of view,

<sup>1</sup> From a preface to an edition of the *Iliad* in the 'Catena Classicorum' series.

therefore, we regard it, a late revision or a late composition must be assumed ; and the question takes the new form—how much did the reviser or composer do ; what new work did he add ; how far did he follow others ; how far did he produce an original poem ?

These are points on which I will not attempt to offer an opinion. When it is seen clearly what are the real questions at issue their interest becomes mainly antiquarian. Whatever results may be arrived at, they cannot alter our judgement of the poems, nor ought they to lessen our admiring love for their authors. The merit is the same, whether the Homeric poems are the work of one man, or rather of an age and a nation that found in noble verse its natural expression, and the fullest satisfaction of all its deepest thoughts,—as our own age and nation finds an expression and a satisfaction in political and industrial creations, and in the development of the exact sciences. For, in spite of the varied richness of our poetical literature, we have no poet who is to us what Homer was to the Greek.

The substance of the Homeric poems belongs to a time when philosophy, properly so called, had not sprung into being. And yet questions had been started similar to those to which philosophy afterwards turned itself and furnished only a different kind of answer. It might seem strange that the most difficult questions were the first to occupy attention—that subjects, of which we still know nothing, should have been confidently dealt with in the early dawn of knowledge. Yet history shows us that it was so, and has always been so. What was the origin of the world ? what the inner nature of the forces by which it is guided and governed ? how is it that the ‘Laws of Nature,’ as we call them, produce the effects we witness ? Philosophers took these questions and dealt with them in their own way. The world had arisen out of water, or

air, or from the four elements combined; attraction and repulsion, love and hatred, necessity, chance, intellect;—such were the principles assumed to solve the problem, such the conjectures thrown out at random, and admitting neither of being confirmed nor refuted. Grotesque and useless in themselves, in their own place and order these theories are not to be undervalued. The time had not yet come for gradual work and patient industry, building up by slow degrees the great edifice of knowledge. Mankind in their feebleness and ignorance could be stimulated to exertion only by the deceptive prospect of omniscience; and the journey must be short, and the road smooth, and the goal easy of attainment. Think what we may of these notions now, modern science could never have arisen without them. But neither could they have arisen but for the system of thought that preceded them—the philosophy, as I shall venture to call it, of which the Homeric poems furnish us with the best examples. With Homer, all was referred to the personal agency of gods, either residing in or identified with the several parts and phenomena of the material universe. The sun is a god, pursuing his daily journey through the heavens, and overlooking all things. The lightning is the sign and messenger of the wrath of Zeus. Pestilence and death come from the darts of Apollo or Artemis. Night and morning, even, are erected into divine personages. Men explained the world around them by the laws of their own nature, and knew no other explanation. Religion, history, art, philosophy, science—as far as these were possible, they are all combined in Homer's encyclopaedic verse.

But what was the human nature which Homer has described, and the society of which the Homeric hero was a member? They were very different from human nature and society as they exist now, or as they existed at a later period of Greek history. The Homeric king is drawn as



being in effect a constitutional sovereign. His power was inherited from his forefathers, and his prerogatives were fixed and limited—fixed by custom and tradition rather than by enactment, and limited by the presence of the nobles who surrounded him, and themselves possessed a power similar to his own. Over the common people, indeed, the monarch was supreme, but here his supremacy ended. With his nobles he was little more than *primus inter pares*—their natural leader, as long as he showed capacity to lead them; their judge and lawgiver as long as the *θέμιονες* he uttered bore stamp of the divine wisdom which was supposed to have dictated them. This state of society passed away when the nobles raised themselves to a full equality with the king, and substituted an avowed aristocratical for a monarchical form of government. The accession of the commons to a share of political power was, in every case, of later growth.

We may learn, too, from Homer's pages, how weak was the tie which bound together the assembled Greek warriors. The Hellenic name and traditions were of later origin. It was not yet felt that the *Ἕλληνες* were a separate people, the sole possessors of civilization—the worthy representatives of the race, while the outer world was barbarian. The story of the wrath of Achilles illustrates very well this weakness of national sentiment. At offence given, he abandons the whole purpose of the campaign, and for some time withdraws his troops from all part in the war. And this continues until the same blind impulse (*θυμός*) which had led him to inactivity, forces him on again to battle. It is to revenge the death of Patroclus that he fights, just as it was to avenge the rape of Briseïs that he had retired. The difficulties of Agamemnon were very similar to those which beset Montrose in the management of his troops of Highlanders; and they arose in both cases from the same cause—from the absence of any real bond

of union among the half-disciplined forces of which the army of either leader was composed—from the absence, in other words, of nationality.

It is less easy, perhaps, to show the essential differences between human nature then and now; but there are some obvious remarks which may help us to feel that such differences there are, real and deeply seated. It is clear, in the first place, that several types of character have come into existence since Homer's time—the man of science, the philanthropist, the saint—while none have wholly disappeared. There is a corresponding difference, too, among some of the habitual motives and impulses under which men acted. The destructive instincts were in excess, the constructive barely developed. Veneration and love were possible; but benevolence—a regard for the good of others, independently of race and family—there was no such thing, nor did the militant civilization of Greece admit of it. We might readily multiply remarks such as these, but the matter will be made clearer by concrete instances than by any abstract discussion of types or motives. We shall be in a fair position to understand it when we consider, on the one hand, how easily could Ajax or Achilles or Priam or Diomed find a place or a counterpart in the modern world. The very characters seem to exist about us, to meet us with a deceptive freshness, and endanger our forgetting the changes that man's nature has undergone. But what place or what counterpart could be found, in Homer's world, for Howard, for Bossuet, for Newton, for St. Francis?

I must add, before concluding, that, much as there is uncertain about the early history of Homer, we may assume the following as established. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were not the work of the same man, nor do they belong to the same age, or order of poetry. And further, the *Iliad* bears more indisputable marks of a composite

origin than the *Odyssey* does. It was probably much the earlier poem, though it existed at first only in a fragmentary form. And again, it is certain (however we may explain the fact) that, whereas in Pindar's time there had been a vast body of Epic poetry, the whole of which had been popularly considered as Homeric, in Plato's time the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* had been separated off from the rest, and were substantially the same as we now possess them. It is true, indeed<sup>1</sup>, that the Homer even of late classical times cannot have been entirely the same as ours. This would follow from the nature of the work done subsequently by the Alexandrian grammarians and their successors in the task of criticism. They rearranged and altered and omitted much of the material they had received; but I call that material substantially the same as ours when I am comparing it with the vast chaotic mass, of which the contents of our *Iliad* and *Odyssey* formed but a small part, and the whole of which in Pindar's day went indiscriminately under the common title of Homer and the Homeric poems.

<sup>1</sup> Among the many proofs which could be offered of this, I have come across two curious instances which I have not seen elsewhere noted. In Aristotle, *Hist. Anim.* bk. vi. cap. 28, the lines following are given as Homeric:—

Θρέψεν ἔπι χλοῦνην σὺν ἀγριον, οὐδὲ ἐφάκει  
 Θηρί γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ βίῳ ὕληντι.

These occur nowhere in our Homer. They appear to be made up, with slight alterations, from the account of the wild boar sent by Artemis to ravage the plantations of Oeneus, *Il.* ix. 539, and from the description of the Cyclops, *Od.* ix. 190, 191.

Again, in the *Poetics*, cap. 8, Aristotle, praising Homer for the essential unity of his writings, states expressly that the story of Ulysses' wound on Mount Parnassus is not given in the *Odyssey*. It forms part of bk. xix in the *Odyssey* as we possess it. However, since Aristotle's statement admits of being understood in a less precise sense than the above, I subjoin it *in extenso*. 'Οδύσσειαν γὰρ ποιῶν οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἅπαντα ὅσα αὐτῷ συνέβη, οἷον πληγῇναι μὲν ἐν τῷ Παρνασσῷ, μανῆναι δὲ προσποιήσασθαι ἐν τῷ ἀγερμῷ—ἀλλὰ περὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν οἷαν λέγομεν τὴν 'Οδύσσειαν συνέστησεν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὴν 'Ιλιάδα.

I have written in my notes nothing about the beauties of Homer as a poet. The omission has been intentional; for I doubt whether a series of demands made on the reader's admiration is at all likely to do any good—whether it does not tend rather to interfere with his enjoyment of the marked passages than to stimulate it. But, as I do not wish to pass the subject altogether, I will say now that the special characteristics of Homer's verse are sustained grandeur, and along with it (and the union is a most rare excellence) a perfect freedom from complexity in thought or language, and a force of genius that seems to flow ever without exhaustion and without consciousness of effort—rapidity, simplicity, nobleness. And as we read his lines, the sense ought never to be absent that we are in the presence of one of the three or four great poets of all time; that, as Dante for modern art, so, for ancient art, Homer stands out as the first and principal figure—the *poeta sovrano* beyond all limits of rivalry or comparison. Theirs are the verses which embody a perfection which we can conceive only because they have shown it to us. It is our reverence which is due here and not our praise. The space about these men is holy ground.

## VIII.

### MR. GLADSTONE ON HOMER<sup>1</sup>.

MR. GLADSTONE'S latest Homeric studies have carried him a good deal beyond the positions he had before occupied. Besides the view, which he shares with the whole world of scholars, that there is a certain sense in which the Homeric poems are historical, he long ago expressed his belief in the more doubtful and more disputable points of the orthodox Homeric creed, and has employed both learning and ingenuity in defending them. His present volume, which, as he explains in his Introduction, 'has for its nucleus two papers published in the *Contemporary Review* for the months of July and August, 1874,' contains the new articles which he has added. They agree with all the positive conclusions he maintained before, and contradict only the negative ones. We used to hear that in the story of the fortunes of Troy and of her people there was a solid nucleus of fact, but that there were no adequate *data* for fixing the precise age of the story-teller, or of the events of which he was the sole voucher. Mr. Gladstone's belief now is that these missing *data* have been found, and that the Homeric record can not only be shown to be consistent within itself, but can further be brought into connexion with the general course of human affairs

<sup>1</sup> *Homeric Synchronism: an Enquiry into the Time and Place of Homer*, by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P. London: Macmillan & Co., 1876.

as we learn it from other sources. The arrangement of the new volume is somewhat less clear than we could wish. Mr. Gladstone, in treating of Homer, or, to use his own word, of Homerology, is so exceedingly desirous of proving that he has solid ground under him, that he can scarcely bring himself to miss any opportunity of pointing it out. Accordingly, though there is no inconsistency, there is a good deal less order than we could wish, and in particular the concluding pages bear the marks of hurried and incomplete workmanship.

Mr. Gladstone has divided his present treatise into two parts. In the first he discusses chiefly the locality of Troy and the age and dwelling-place of Homer. In the second he endeavours to determine the age of the Trojan War. For the first he summons to his assistance the discoveries, or reputed discoveries, of Dr. Schliemann. These he tests and examines by a minute comparison with the Homeric text—a process which, under Mr. Gladstone's ingenious handling, is made confirmatory of both text and comment. But to exhibit the affairs of Troy in their proper place as a part of general history some more potent help was needed, and this Mr. Gladstone has found chiefly in the recent interpretations which have been given to old Egyptian records and in names and allusions which have been found in them. Mr. Gladstone does not indeed insist, on the one hand, that we are to accept as true everything which we may find in Homer, or, on the other, that his own account of the Homeric chronology is absolutely free from doubt. Homeric truth is of a broad, general kind, and does not concern itself with too precise an accuracy of details as to times and places. Mr. Gladstone's own conclusions are, similarly, not more than probable. He has his notion, both of the time at which Homer lived, and of that at which the main action of the *Iliad* occurred, but he is content to say

that his chronology is after all approximate ; nor does he promise more for it than that it will be enough for the satisfaction of reasonable minds. We cannot but take this last epithet as intended very largely to qualify any claim to universal acceptance which the rest of the passage might seem to urge.

Though we have no space for a complete examination of Mr. Gladstone's little volume, we must, at least, give one or two specimens of his method of proceeding. First among these, both for its ingenuity and for the importance of the conclusion to which it points, we will take his attempt to deal with some of the Homeric names, and to show from them the connexion between the Homeric poems and Egypt, and through this the place of the former in history. He makes, before commencing, the very amplest concessions to his antagonists. He will assume nothing that they will not be prepared to grant. The poems are not to be thought historical except as far as they may be proved to be so. They are not even to be taken as the work of one man or of one age. They are assumed to be facts and nothing more—an assumption from which the most sceptical of critics will scarcely venture to dissent. Now, among these facts or records, or whatever else they are to be termed, comes beyond doubt the genealogy of the Royal House of Troy. It starts from Dardanus—Mr. Gladstone will excuse us in this and in other instances for not following his spelling—and it continues down, through eight generations in all, to the children of Aeneas and Hector. The third place is occupied by Tros, under whom the Dardanian name descends to a secondary place, and the Trojan name comes to the front. We must add, too, that it was Ilus, a son of Tros, who built the city in the plain, and gave a further name to the people, though he did not displace the former one.

We find, next, in the Egyptian records, that in the fourth year of the reign of Rameses II, i. e. in 1406 B. C., a powerful conspiracy was organized, including among many others the inhabitants of Asia Minor. As some read the names, the Dardanians are included among these. We find, therefore, that in 1406 the name of Dardanians had not yet been supplanted by that of Trojans. We are, therefore, at the time of Dardanus or of his immediate son, and since each generation is counted to last thirty years, we have not more than sixty years as a possible margin of error. In Mr. Gladstone's words, 'the settlement of Dardania was probably founded between 1466 and 1406, and the overthrow of Troy, on the same basis of computation, would probably fall between 1286 and 1226 B. C.' This margin is, however, enlarged by a doubt whether the Dardanians in question did not belong to the third royal period and not to the first or second—an uncertainty which throws back the Dardanian history and the capture of Troy by thirty years, 'more or less,' as Mr. Gladstone very properly adds.

We must pass next to the 'Achaean link.' The name Achaean had, as Mr. Gladstone truly says, both a special and a general significance. His belief is that it became a name among the Greeks not more than fifty or sixty years before the Trojan War, and that it maintained a chief place for some uncertain time afterwards—probably for about eighty years. Now, we know with such certainty as the Egyptian records can give us that in the first half of the sixteenth century B. C., Thothmes III had subdued some part of Greece. What more likely, therefore, than that the Greeks of a later date should have wished to revenge themselves for the wrongs of their ancestors, and should have joined in an invasion of Egypt which occurred near the commencement of the reign of Merephthah—i. e., roughly speaking, about 1345 B. C. ? We certainly find



among the lists of invaders a name which has several letters in common with the name of the Achaeans, and another name which some suppose to be that of the Laconians, others of the Peloponnesian Lycians. The date 1345 B. C. may therefore be safely taken as falling within the hundred years or so during which the Achaean name was known. Nay, more, since Achaeans and Laconians are mentioned together, we should probably be right in referring the attack on Egypt to the former half of the Achaean century, when the Achaean name had not yet extended to its full limits. This invasion, therefore, was, most probably, within some fifty or sixty years before the Trojan War, and the war itself will come between 1345 and 1285 B. C., a date sufficiently in accordance with that which has been deduced from the history of Rameses II and of the Royal House of Dardanus.

We desire to do justice to Mr. Gladstone's zeal and unwearied industry as an Homeric critic. There are many points on which he has rendered valuable service. It is something for him to have shown conclusively that Achilles is throughout the real hero of the *Iliad*, and that Hector, whom some would push forward in advance of him, did not, in the estimation of the poet, occupy the first place of honour. It is something, too, that he has done justice to the moral elevation and purity of the Homeric poems, a quality we shall the more value if we bear in mind the moral debasement of the society amid which they must have been composed and for whose amusement they must have been recited. Mr. Gladstone's recognition of it stands in contrast with the degraded ideas which even a Plato could delight to import into Homeric criticism. We may doubt, however, whether Mr. Gladstone's later work has the solid character he assigns to it. Our instances have, of course, been insufficient as materials for forming a judgement about an argument which is essen-

tially cumulative; but as far as they go they show something of the way in which the argument is conducted and of the nature of the assumptions which it involves. Our readers will form their own opinion from the book itself, and we do not think it will be wholly favourable. When we think of the general vagueness of the evidence, of the absolute impossibility of testing the greater part of it, and, further, of the vast number of points which have confessedly to be granted in addition to it, we almost despair of being accounted among the 'reasonable minds' which Mr. Gladstone has been striving to satisfy.

We must add one or two examples of mistakes of Mr. Gladstone's in a sphere within which things do not proceed altogether by guesswork, and within which, therefore, correction is possible. When the Egyptians, says Wilkinson, represented the Moon in company with the Sun, the form they gave to her was that of a crescent and not of a smaller disk. This, Mr. Gladstone argues, is in such agreement with the figures on the shield of Achilles as to be a new proof of the undoubted connexion of which we are all aware between Homer and Egypt. The only fault of the reasoning is that it demands that *πλήθουσιν* shall be rendered in a sense which, as far as we are aware, no interpreter before Mr. Gladstone has assigned to it. The accepted translation indeed proves the exact opposite of what Mr. Gladstone is endeavouring to establish. Still more strange is another proof Mr. Gladstone has detected of the influence of Egyptian ideas with Homer. There were, Mr. Gladstone tells us, twenty divine beings whom the Egyptians used to worship, and a host of others besides to which no precise number can be assigned. Now, twenty, curiously enough, was also the number of the greater Olympian gods, a fact which is shown by Vulcan's making twenty seats for their use. The weak point of the argument is that *τρίπους*, which Mr. Gladstone takes as 'seat,'

means really either a pot-stand or a pot. It is a common enough Homeric word, but in no single passage does the meaning 'seat' belong to it. Nor ought Mr. Gladstone to have said that Homer does not reflect upon the divine life the pains and infirmities which belong to human nature. Surely the wounds both of Ares and of Aphrodite, in the Fifth Book of the *Iliad*, and the topics of consolation which we find addressed to the latter, form the very strongest instances to the contrary! These instances and others like them do not tend to increase our confidence when we are asked to follow blindfold in reliance upon Mr. Gladstone as our guide. We have every confidence in Mr. Gladstone's honesty of purpose in advocating his favourite views. Our doubt is whether he is not too much of an advocate to be an impartial judge or even a competent witness. The ground on which he trusts has, at least, a very strange resemblance to a quagmire, with here and there a firm spot on which the foot can rest with safety. Our admiration is due, anyhow, to the agility he has displayed in passing about his uncertain territory.

## IX.

### TEN YEARS OF REGISTRATION<sup>1</sup>.

AMONG the most potent aids which English Medical Science has received during the present century we may place beyond all doubt the knowledge obtained by the careful carrying out of the Registration Act. It is now just forty years since that Act came into force. The interval has been a very busy one for our professed medical statisticians. The materials have fast accumulated under their hands, and have been arranged and digested and looked at from every side and compared diligently with one another, and have so been rendered really valuable as a means of insight into the conditions of life and health. In the volume before us Dr. Farr has set forth the results of ten years of registration, from 1861 to 1870, and the importance and interest of the conclusions he has drawn from them, are some proof of the magnitude of our store of facts and the value of the knowledge it may be made to reveal. Uncertain as individual human life must always be, we now know that its average duration may be most precisely calculated, that the general and special dangers may be weighed to which each class of Englishmen will be exposed at each age of their existence, and that if the numbers taken into account

<sup>1</sup> *Supplement to the Thirty-fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in England* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1875).

are large enough, a very accurate forecast may be made of the exact fate which is awaiting them.

A hundred years is fixed by Dr. Farr as the natural lifetime of man. In other words, if all children were born in perfect health and were to live afterwards under the most favourable sanitary conditions, a hundred years would be the age to which every one of them would attain. As a matter of fact, this extreme limit is reached by scarcely one English child in 100,000. The average duration of life in England is only forty-one years, and even in the most healthy districts of the country it scarcely amounts to fifty years. But in spite of all drawbacks, the sanitary progress we have already made has been by no means inconsiderable. Two hundred years ago the yearly mortality in London was not less than 8 per cent. A hundred years ago it had been reduced to 5 per cent. It is now 2.4. The more carefully, too, that we look into the causes of the mortality which exists among us, the more certainly shall we feel convinced that it can be still further reduced. Impure air, impure water, accidents by negligence, and mischief done in a thousand preventable ways, all number their yearly victims. There are no less than fifty-four large tracts of the country where the yearly mortality for each thousand of the inhabitants is less by five than the average mortality, and less by twenty-two than the mortality of Liverpool. Even in these there are faults in such abundance that we need not anywhere despair of attaining to their standard. In other words, the yearly death-rate of England—or the death-toll, as Dr. Farr very graphically terms it—ought not to be suffered to exceed 17 per 1000, and all who die in excess of that number must be considered simply as sacrificed to the ignorance or carelessness of society. Nor does the evil of a high death-rate end with the mere loss of life which it implies. It is

found by experience that for each annual death there are at least two cases of severe sickness, and that whatever causes influence the one order of events influence the other, too, in the same proportion. A diminution of the year's deaths means, therefore, a better chance of good health to the survivors. This will be to many persons the most attractive side of the picture.

It is unfortunate that our returns of sickness are much less complete than those of death. Dr. Farr can tell his readers the chances that any named disease will prove fatal to any one of them; he can give much less certain information of the chance that they will be attacked by it, or of the length of time that the attack will last. If the clinical history of civilians could be as carefully recorded as that of soldiers, the deficiency would be soon supplied. We find, however, that there is by no means the same staff of skilled reporters in the former case as in the latter. The difference is very considerable. Every 202 soldiers have one medical man to look after them, and to record their sanitary condition. Among civilians there is but one medical man to every 1,276 men, women, and children.

Let us look now at what Dr. Farr calls the march of an English generation through life. Let us follow the physical fortune any million of our countrymen and countrywomen may expect. The first thing we will say is that their number has been made up of 511,745 boys, and of only 488,255 girls, a disproportion which will by-and-by be redressed by the undue mortality of the boys, and will be reversed before the scene is ended. We will add next that more than a quarter of them will die before they are five years old, or, in exact numbers, 141,387 boys and 121,795 girls. The two sexes are now not far from an exact level. The next five years will be very much less fatal to either sex. The survivors have gone through

risks which will never recur. They have probably all suffered from some one or more of the many diseases of childhood; and whooping cough, or measles, or scarlet fever, which have claimed from them already their thousands and tens of thousands of victims, will have no further terrors for the rest. In the next five years—i.e. from 10 to 15—the mortality will be still more reduced. This is, indeed, the most healthy period of life, the period of which the death-rate is lowest for both sexes, but lower for boys than for girls. There will be some advance of deaths in the next five years, and still more in the five that follow, but 634,045 may confidently expect to enter on their 26th year. Before the end of the next ten years two-thirds of the women will have been married. The deaths will be 62,052, of which not less than 27,134 will be caused by consumption. Between 35 and 45 a still larger 'death-toll' will be paid. In spite of the diminished numbers, the deaths will become more frequent, and only a little more than half the original band, or in exact numbers 502,915, will pass on into the next decade of years. Each succeeding decade up to 75 will now become more fatal. At the age of 55 the new deaths will have been 81,800; at 65 they will have been 112,086; at 75, 147,905. The numbers have now shrunk terribly. Only 161,124 still remain to be struck down, and of these 122,559 will have passed away by the eighty-fifth year of the march. The 38,565 that remain, the forlorn hope of well-tried veterans, are now not far from the end. 2,153 of them will live to be 95, and 223 to be 100 years old. Finally, in the 108th year of the course, the last solitary life will flicker out.

This, then, is the average lot of a million Englishmen and Englishwomen. There are, as we have said, some specially favoured districts where the chances of a long life will be much greater, and there are some dark spots,

notably in and about Liverpool, where the step of death will be much more rapid. If the rest of England were as healthy as Hampstead, the deaths before five years would be reduced by more than 80,000. Each succeeding period would be less fatal than it has been shown actually to be, and there would be nearly double the amount of survivors up to 85 years. In Liverpool—or rather in old Liverpool before 1870, for it is down to that year only that Dr. Farr's tables extend—the infants which died were not much fewer than half of the entire number born, and, if the conditions of life had everywhere been as unfavourable, of the whole million of lives with which we started there would have been found at 85 to be only 6,003 survivors.

But we must not forget a curious economical aspect in which this question of the chances of life and death may present itself. Man is not only a living, sentient being, with capacity for health and sickness, for happiness and misery. He is besides this a most useful industrial machine, and has, as such, a value which can be approximately calculated. As long as he produces more than he consumes, so long does he add to the general stock of wealth, and the longer the capability is thought likely to continue, the greater will be the producer's capitalized value. In childhood, and up to the time at which he begins to be self-supporting, he will have a price, just as a young colt or heifer will—not for what he can do now, but for what may be one day expected from him. When the season of effectual work is over, and old age—the one incurable malady—has supervened, the prolongation of existence will cease to be an economical benefit. The machine, for some time before it is quite worn out, will cost more to keep going than it will be able to render in return, and the result will be a minus quantity. Dr. Farr gives us some very nice calculations as to the value, from this point of view, of our agricultural classes. The cost



of future maintenance has, in each case, to be set against the value of future earnings, and in the degree in which the one or the other preponderates, so the value of the animated tool will follow. The Norfolk agricultural labourer is worth, we are told, just £5 at his birth. When he has survived the first dangers of infancy, and has advanced five years nearer the time at which he will become a productive agent, his price rises to no less than £56, and this again in five years more is something more than doubled. At the age of twenty-five years he has attained his *maximum* value, £246, and he declines afterwards steadily, but slowly, down to £138 at fifty-five years of age, and to £1 at the age of seventy. From that time onwards the cost of his maintenance will begin to exceed the value of his earnings, until at eighty years old his value has gone down to £41 *minus*. The same method may clearly be applied to the whole of our professional and industrial classes, as well as to the very large class of those *fruges consumere nati* whose economical value will rise only in proportion to their diminished chances of prolonged life, and even so, will never reach to as high a point as zero.

The relative health of men engaged in various occupations is a subject which has long received the attention of medical philosophy. Dr. Farr has attacked the question with the aid of precise figures. The first place, or a place among the first, he assigns to our farmers and agricultural labourers, and in no country, he adds, are the agricultural classes healthier than they are in England. We learn that the mortality of our manufacturing classes is no longer exceptionally high. The beneficial change is attributed by Dr. Farr to the labours of 'Lord Shaftesbury and his enlightened colleagues,' and we can make no question that they have had a principal share in promoting it. Something, too, must be allowed to the

employers of labour, without whose hearty co-operation no Factory Acts could be of much service. Among the most healthy occupations Dr. Farr includes those of the hunter and sportsman, and regrets only that the higher parts of the brain are not always cultivated by those who engage in them. The earthenware manufacture is one of the unhealthiest trades in the country. The average of death is at first low, but after the age of 35 it is nearly double that of the other trades. Metal working does not begin to be injurious until ten years later, but from 45 onwards the mischief it inflicts grows each year heavier and heavier. The trade of coachmaking is similarly a very healthy one at first, but at 45 it begins to be exceptionally fatal. Hard work and exposure to weather or to the chance of accident are, of course, among the most general causes which make some trades and professions mischievous. But the opposite extremes are scarcely less fatal. Tailors, drapers, hairdressers, and publicans, none of whom have a very hard life, are, nevertheless, counted by Dr. Farr among the unhealthy classes. Publicans in particular are shown to suffer more from fatal diseases than the members of almost any other known class—a fact which Dr. Farr ascribes to their habits of indulgence in repeated small doses of alcoholic poison. Clergymen and barristers appear to be among the most favoured classes. Physicians and surgeons up to 45 are very much less fortunate. After that age they do not, says Dr. Farr, approach the clergy in health, but they do not fall below the average of the rest.

The fact is that the physical conditions of a sound life are very much the same everywhere, and that those trades and professions will be the healthiest which can most exactly conform to them. Pure air, pure water, good food, not taken in excess, regular exercise, which exerts, as far as possible, all the muscles without overstraining

any of them, sufficient sleep, protection against the extremes both of heat and cold—these are the chief points to which those must attend who wish to live long and healthily. Some of these are within the reach of all, though few, probably, avail themselves of them as completely as they might. Even so, there would still remain many cases in which men were sacrificed by the faults of others or by the necessarily hard conditions under which they carried on their work. Civilized life has its dangers as well as its privileges. It inflicts injuries of which savage man has no knowledge. It claims its myriads of victims whom a less developed state of society would have spared. The remedy for all this, we may hope, is to come. The mere knowledge of the evil is in itself a first and necessary step towards its cure. To improve the health of the present generation is, Dr. Farr reminds us, the duty which lies ready to our hands. Those who come after us will, no doubt, go further than we shall have gone; and, in due course, time will yield ‘results which, if suddenly manifested, would appear’—and, we may add, would indeed be—‘miraculous.’

## X.

### BACON'S ESSAYS<sup>1</sup>.

DR. ABBOTT'S school edition of Bacon's *Essays* is among the signs of the wider course which our educational system has somewhat lately begun to follow. We welcome it accordingly, and are only sorry not to be able to bestow unmixed praise upon it. The notes, which are very full, do not seem to leave untouched any difficult or doubtful passages. Their fault, we will at once say, is, that they are too full for their professed purposes, and that they frequently overload the text with a mass of imperfect information which, even in a better form, would not be wanted for explaining it. It is, however, in the length at which he deals with Bacon himself that Dr. Abbott has laid himself open to most criticism. He is right enough in assuming that the student of Bacon, or of any other great writer, should be told something about the man whose works are before him, and should be informed sufficiently about the circumstances and purpose of the book, and, so to say, about the framework in which it has been set. But a series of lengthy discussions on Bacon's life and character, on Bacon as a philosopher, on Bacon as a theologian, and all the rest of it, is not what either boys or men can want as introductory to Bacon's *Essays*. The subjects are interesting enough, but they stand too forbiddingly at the threshold. We

<sup>1</sup> *Bacon's Essays*, with Introductory Notes and Index by Edwin A. Abbott, D.D., Headmaster of the City of London School. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1875.

will not counsel Dr. Abbott in any subsequent edition to omit altogether this part of his work, but he will certainly do well to reconsider a great deal of it, and, above all, to cut it down with an unsparing hand. It is the notes, however, which are most clearly worth improving, and their versatile author would act wisely to turn his chief strength upon these.

Bacon, it is well known, professed to set no great value on his *Essays*. He speaks of them slightly as the 'recreations' of his other studies. We must not be too ready to take in earnest an author's dispraise of any part of his own writings, and yet we shall scarcely be wrong in believing that it was not by his *Essays* that Bacon most desired to be known. The judgement of the world has not confirmed the somewhat condemnatory sentence. The *Essays* were not only seized upon greedily at their first appearance, but they have ever since retained the place of favour. They are in everybody's hand, and the more carefully they are looked into, the greater is the delight with which they are read. The reflections they contain on human life and affairs come from the pen of one who knew his subject from every side. He was acquainted with riches and with poverty. He was no stranger to the arts and contrivances by which men seek advancement, to the cunning which affects the airs of wisdom in counsel or in conduct. The style of the *Essays*, too, is by no means their least praise. Bacon always writes grandly. There is consummate art in the garb of exalted wisdom which he can fling about his meanest and most commonplace thoughts, yet without the least obvious unfitness between the thoughts and the language. His oracular manner, his sudden breaks, which leave the reader still eager and expectant; his way of saying all he wishes to say, and then of dismissing his subject with a wave of magnificent contempt; his compressed fullness of meaning,

his wide range of thought, his seeming insight into the very centre of things, his undisturbed calmness—there may be a trick of style in all these, but it is one which has not yet grown stale, and the full secret of which the world has never yet found out.

As to Bacon himself we have the fullest possible information. His acts, his published writings, and his private diary are all now before the world ; and the material they afford is ample. Bacon, it is certain, longed eagerly after success in life, and was not scrupulous as to the means he employed for attaining it. He was, we know, a man of most ambitious mind and of most carelessly expensive habits ; and the power and money he desired were sought for by any methods which seemed best calculated for securing them. From first to last there is nothing inconsistent about his whole public career. We will not say much about his so-called treason to Essex. It is the later period of his career that is the most prominent and the most absolutely indefensible. Mr. Spedding, the avowed champion of Bacon's moral worth, honestly records, together with explanations of his own, facts wholly at variance with the view to which he persistently commits himself. Bacon had been somewhat in the shade during Queen Elizabeth's reign, whether it was to the queen or to her discerning ministers that he had most failed to recommend himself. The accession of James brought him better hopes of advancement. To gain and keep favour with the new king, and with those who had the new king's ear, became now Bacon's chief object. He received his reward. He was made, in due course, Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, Privy Councillor, Lord Keeper, and Lord Chancellor.

'It is most true,' says the great essayist, 'that was anciently spoken,—*A place sheweth the man.*' Let us see, therefore, how he himself used the opportunities which

his great place afforded him. His rising had been 'laborious,' and, it has often been charged, it had been 'base.' Dr. Abbott's somewhat singular plea for Bacon's early misdeeds is that they were prompted by a regard to the great interests of science, and that his real wish was not to get anything for himself, but only to serve mankind by promoting scientific research from the vantage-ground of high position. But did Bacon as Chancellor found colleges or organize a professional staff, or in any way do more for science than he might have done from a much humbler standpoint? It is unfortunate for Dr. Abbott's theory that our answer to all these questions must be in the negative. Nor does his conduct fall in at all better with Mr. Spedding's very different view. His Chancellorship was corrupt in every way. The charge against him of having approved the infliction of torture is, in Mr. Spedding's opinion, so grave, that he has thought it necessary to make it the subject of a special denial. It was scarcely worth while to do so in one case, while another charge of the kind stood in his own pages recorded against his great protégé, and with accompanying circumstances that vastly aggravate the guilt. There was one Peacock—a poor half-crazy fellow—who had been accused of using witchcraft to obtain influence over King James' mind. The inquiry into this was deemed by the king so important that it was specially committed to the new Chancellor. Now, to undertake such a case at all was a piece of flattery, and perhaps a necessary piece of flattery on Bacon's part, to a silly and superstitious monarch. To carry it through, as Bacon did, by what he must have known to be the useless infliction of torture, was a crime which we cannot thus lightly excuse; but the evidence that it was committed is clear on every point. We have Bacon's own letter to the king first suggesting the torture of Peacock. Bacon's name was signed to the

warrant under which the torture was to be applied. Lastly, we have the account of the actual infliction of the torture given on the twofold authority of Camden and Chamberlain.

But how, we must ask, did Bacon discharge his more ordinary official duties? What these were none knew better than himself. His *Essay on Judicature* is a perfect sketch of the office of a righteous judge. His *Chancellorship* is, on many points, an equally perfect exemplification of the contrary. The place of justice, he tells us, is a hallowed place. The Judge sits in the seat of God. And Bacon, so sitting, and knowing himself so sitting, was yet quite freely open to oblique influences. Some of his wrong deeds were, at least, not likely to bring him into any trouble. When he listened to the powerful intercession of Buckingham and pronounced an unrighteous decree in consequence of it, he was, so far, in no danger of a forfeiture of his court favour. It was otherwise when he was found to have been in the habit of receiving money from Chancery suitors. When this charge was brought against him, supported apparently by the clearest proofs, and when Parliament was determined that the case should be thoroughly gone into, it was, indeed, time for Bacon to make his appeal to the king to stand between him and his accusers. There was no phrase of flattery to which he was not now ready to resort. His past services were paraded, not untruly, indeed, but with more dishonour than if the reference had been less correct. The appeal did not quite succeed. James was too just or too cautious to interpose on the main issue. Bacon fell, and by a judgement which, on his own confession, was well deserved; and the kindness of the king was limited to breaking the full effects of the fall by remitting the most severe clauses of the sentence.



Now, what is the conclusion as to Bacon's character to which all this evidence and plenty more points? It is clear that with his enormous intellect was joined what we may describe most kindly as a very passive and neutral moral nature. Our wonder is that, in so clear a case, the matter can have been in much dispute. We need not, indeed, quite follow Lord Macaulay's unmeasured language, nor subscribe too literally to Pope's carefully contrasted superlatives. But, make what allowance we may, the facts that will remain are much too stubborn to be got over. Bacon, as we have seen already, was a man by no means insensible to moral distinctions, nor was he without a clear perception of the excellency of virtuous conduct. His writings all through contain the most ample proof to the contrary, but we must be satisfied not to look beyond them. His virtuous impulses were abundant. The misfortune was that they were much too weak to prevail where virtue and interest were opposed.

But whatever judgement we may form about Bacon's moral weaknesses, and whatever excuse or explanation we may admit or refuse to admit for them, we must remember that in treating of the man they are the very smallest part of our materials. It is by force of intellect that Bacon has made his name great. This it is which he has stamped upon every sentence that his pen has written. This, at least, his most bitter assailant will not refuse to recognize in him. But we must remember that even here it is possible to go too far, and to ascribe to Bacon an intellectual eminence of a kind which he has not fairly earned. Those who, like Dr. Abbott, see in Bacon the great founder of inductive science may support themselves for a while by an appeal to popular tradition, but they had better not look too closely into Bacon's writings or endeavour to prove their point by a reference to chapter and verse. They will be driven at last, as Dr. Abbott is,

after a most tiresome exposition of Bacon's method, to confess that in sober truth Bacon did but little for the direct advancement of science. The fact, of course, is that the inductive method had been employed before Bacon's time, and that Bacon's analysis of it is so imperfect as to be of the very smallest practical use. Little as he knew of what his contemporaries and his immediate predecessors had done, and little qualified as he was to pass a judgment in precise terms upon their work, he yet contrived by a happy instinct to discern the general tendency of the age. This done, he boldly associated his name with what he felt to be the cause of progress, and he risked his credit upon the event. Again, the opinion that the death-blow of the scholastic philosophy came from the *Novum Organum* is not wholly unfounded, but it is still far from being true. Scholasticism was dying hard, but its sentence had been pronounced before Lord Bacon's time, and was already in course of being carried out. Bacon's assumption of the black cap did something, no doubt, to make the case seem more hopeless and the doom more obviously just. The value of his *Novum Organum* is, anyhow, not to be found in the novelty or in the correctness of its positive method. It stands out rather as the great prose epic which announced to the world, with whatever errors of detail, the dawn of scientific thought. The old gods had been already dethroned when Bacon set his foot upon their necks and denounced them as unworthy of worship. His logical method is imperfect—so imperfect that it has never led, and never could have led, to the discovery of the most important scientific laws. But he saw clearly some of the most essential characteristics of genuine scientific thought. His contrast of the growth and fruitfulness of genuine science based upon nature, with the varying errors and utter sterility of its counterfeit which rests only on opinion, is among the grand truths which

are written for all time ; and the best aphorisms of the *Novum Organum* are perpetually ringing the changes upon it, and illustrating it by concrete instances. Bacon had a lordly style, whether he was writing of science or of whatever else. His boundless love of dominion went far beyond the desire for place or political power. He wished to seat himself on the throne which Aristotle had once occupied, and to be accepted for ever as 'the master of those who know.' His wish has been fulfilled. His contributions to science have been magnified out of all proportion to their merit. He has had the art—we had almost said the craftiness—to link his name with the inductive method, and he has shared its triumphs accordingly. By the very title of his new logic he throws down, as it were, the gauntlet to antiquity, and puts himself forward as the herald and champion of new and militant truth. The battle which he affected to direct has been won, but scarcely by his arm. The shouting was Bacon's part, and the sound of Bacon's voice was like that of Stentor, or of the Homeric Arés. His prophetic notes of triumph have reached us across the busy centuries, and they still ring clearly into our ears. But, we must remember, as we listen to them, that the same grand voice reminds us too, that 'certainly there are, in point of wisdom and sufficiency, that do nothing or little very solemnly,' and that 'nothing doth more hurt in a State than that cunning men pass for wise.'

But the question will, perhaps, be asked how it is that Bacon's claim to scientific eminence has been so widely admitted, if it has been thus really slender. There have, it is true, been always a minority who challenged it. It is why they have been a minority which is the fact needing to be explained. There are several answers which will suggest themselves. Bacon himself was not ill-qualified for success as a reformer of scientific methods. Apart

from knowledge of the details of science, he had indeed every claim to scientific honour. To a vast intellect and incomparable literary skill and majesty he added a belief in himself strong enough to be maintained in the teeth of all evidence, and in circumstances the most trying. His self-esteem bore him bravely through his various public disgraces, and served him as an efficient, and at the same time as a convenient, substitute for a good conscience. The world, in a matter which it does not quite understand, is very apt to accept a man at his own value. It has been too clear-sighted to mistake Bacon for a saint, but it has been very much mistaken in the kind of scientific eminence with which it has accredited him. The course of events has also been favourable to Bacon's claim. Special and general knowledge, or in other words science and philosophy, have sometimes, but sometimes only, and at long intervals, been united in the same persons. The tendency from the sixteenth century onwards has been towards dispersion rather than concentration. The work of science has been going on in detail, and until lately there has been scarcely even a demand for a comprehensive survey of the whole. Each discoverer has thus been picking up his own store of pebbles on the infinite ocean shore, and has scarcely been in a position to mention the claim of another to an intimacy with the entire coast. The example of Bacon, though in some ways the most remarkable, is by no means absolutely unique. Descartes, for example, in addition to his real claim as a mathematician, has obtained a kind of honour not unlike Bacon's, and even less fairly earned. There may be faults and failings innumerable in the pages of the *Novum Organum*, but the book is wisdom and light and the very perfection of science in comparison with the 'Discourse on Method.'

There is much more to be said under the various headings which Dr. Abbott has adopted for the outlying parts

of his subject. It is tempting ground, but we must not suffer ourselves to linger on it too long. Our chief concern, like Dr. Abbott's, is not with Bacon, as a philosopher, or Bacon as a moralist, or Bacon in himself, but with Bacon as the author of Bacon's *Essays*, or, more properly still, with the *Essays* themselves. The value of these to us will not be influenced by any conclusions we may reach about Bacon's general merits or demerits. The work is immortal, and we may pay the debt of honour to it without stopping to balance accounts with its author too exactly all round. It is not only that the matter of the *Essays* is often of the very highest value, that they contain the experience of one who had looked on life from every side, the compressed wisdom of an observer to whom the ways and thoughts of man had long been as an open book. Their perfection is rather in the combination of the matter and the form. The language in which they are written seems the proper clothing of the ideas. There is nothing constrained, nothing artificial, even where they are most elaborated. Their art is far too faultless to present itself to us as art at all. We read them, not only for instruction, but much more for delight. There are greater works in the English language, but there is nothing quite like them, nothing that could take their place if they were lost.

In so well known a volume everybody will have his own favourite places. Turn where we may, we shall be sure to light upon something worth notice. The gems are so thickly and so richly scattered about that it will be in some degree matter of accident on which of them our choice falls. Some readers will be most delighted with passages that have the widest reach. Others will dwell with most pleasure on the marks they may detect of Bacon's own experience or habits. There is free range enough for all. For the admirers of comprehensive writing, there are the *Essays on Truth*, on *Death*, on *Studies*, the two splendid

pairs on Beauty and on Deformity, on Atheism and on Superstition, and others besides scarcely less well known, and with almost as great claim upon notice. For those who desire traces of Bacon's own life and personality, there is an equally wide choice. The Essays on Great Place and on Adversity give us Bacon's reflections upon states of life which he had himself known. Stamped they are with his own personal mark, or with what he wished to be taken as his own personal mark, but there is no trace in them of egotism, no direct allusion to the facts and events which must have prompted them. The Essays on Boldness, and on Ambition, on Suitors, on Judicature, and on Riches show us their author in a variety of characters; or, if not their author, at least as their author desires to represent himself. Where Bacon writes of Expense, or of Building and laying out of Grounds, or of Masques and Triumphs, the subjects are more lightly touched. It is not that he ever lays aside his state robes and calm majesty of manner, but that he sometimes consents to appear less conscious that he is wearing them. The list we have supplied contains diversity enough in all reason, but the book itself is far richer—so rich everywhere, that it is exceedingly difficult to make a choice at all, and quite impossible to foresee what may happen to be the choice of another. It would be easy, no doubt, to pick out passages by the score, where the *Essays* have little merit besides their author's grand air, and as many, too, where the rule or sentiment, however solemnly announced, is wholly at variance with his known practice. But these are points on which we do not now wish to dwell. We are concerned with the *Essays* as a triumph of literary skill, and their success as such is only increased by considerations which, from another point of view, might render them less valuable.

## XI.

### THE MAN VERSUS THE STATE<sup>1</sup>.

'Most of those who now pass as Liberals are Tories of a new Type.' This is the initiatory paradox which Mr. Herbert Spencer puts forward in *The Man versus the State*, and sets himself to explain and justify. He has, first of all, to show the sense he is giving to the names 'Liberal' and 'Tory.' Governments, he tells us, are of two types, each suited to the period to which it belongs, but unsuited to any other period. There is the government which regulates the details of individual life, leaving nothing free, but ordering or forbidding every action and movement. This is the military type of government; an army of conscripts is the most perfect specimen of it. It comes naturally into being at a time when war is the main purpose for which men unite, and it is suited to such a time and to such a purpose.

Unlike this in aim and method is the government which leaves the largest possible freedom to individual life, and endeavours to maintain the conditions under which this freedom can be enjoyed. This is the industrial type of government; a co-operative society is the most perfect specimen of it; it comes naturally into being when military aggression is a thing of the past, and when men have learnt to unite in order to create and improve. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Man versus the State*, by Herbert Spencer. Williams & Norgate, London. 1884.

one is a government under *status*, the other under contract; the one carries through social life the principle of compulsory co-operation, the other that of voluntary co-operation. In modern Europe neither type exists in its completeness. We can only say that governments and political parties incline to the one type or to the other. The compulsory type has been the earlier and the almost universal type precedent. It has survived in the ideas of the divine, hereditary, indefeasible right of rulers and of passive obedience as the corresponding duty on the subject's part. It is this type which would suppress public meetings, would restrict the freedom of the Press, would impose penalties on nonconformity to the established State religion, would forbid combination among working men, would lay restraints on the purchase and sale of goods, both native and foreign. It has been based upon the coercive power of the ruler over the subject. To maintain or to increase this has been the aim of its supporters, and it has lost ground in just the degree in which this has not been maintained.

Under the shadow of this system, or in spite of its hostility, there has sprung up in modern Europe a vast industrial organization, regulated by other rules, directed to other ends, and demanding in its members very different instincts and habits. Nowhere has the old system wholly disappeared. It has been weakened; it has been driven back from one and from another department of life, and the sphere of liberty has been correspondingly enlarged, and the area increased within which each individual citizen can act unchecked.

If we are to give political names to these systems, then the old form, proper to the country rather than to the town, opposed to freedom and growth, putting the *maximum* of power into the hands of rulers and bidding subjects look up to them with reverence, must be called Tory.



The new form, adapted to town life, and to the needs of industrial energy, and encouraging habits of self-respect and freedom and bold criticism of rulers, must take the opposite name of Liberal. The essential distinctions between the two are found, not in the modes employed by each of them for the election of rulers, whether by few or by many; not in the machinery of public administration; not even in the number and extent of the interests which the government seeks to protect, but in the method and purpose on which the system is framed. The Tory, in a word, seeks to enlarge the functions of government; the Liberal to restrain and limit them. We shall find, as Mr. Herbert Spencer shows, ample reason in the history of our own political parties for thus identifying them.

So it has been in the past, but in the whirligig of time a strange change has come. Liberalism has lost its own character, and has borrowed some of the most objectionable attributes of Toryism. It seeks no longer to restrain but to enlarge power. It places individual life very largely under the direction and control of the State, ordering and forbidding in a thousand matters which Mr. Herbert Spencer thinks it would be far wiser to leave alone. In proof of this he gives us a long list of recent measures, interfering with personal liberty, which, whether for good or evil, have become law during periods when the Liberals were in power. The list begins with 1860 under the second Administration of Lord Palmerston; it goes on to show what was done under Mr. Gladstone's first Ministry from 1869 to 1873; it passes finally to Liberal law-making under the present Ministry. The questionable measures are fifty-nine in all; Mr. Gladstone's two Ministries are credited with twenty-eight of them, and it is doubtful, in Mr. Herbert Spencer's opinion, whether there are not more and worse yet to come. We cannot,

he says, pull up at pleasure in the slippery and inclined plane on which we have entered. One piece of faulty, intrusive legislation must be supplemented and cured by another piece. The more we meddle the more shall we be forced to meddle by the failure of our first efforts and the consequent mischief. Meanwhile we have been weakening our habits of self-restraint, we have been interfering with the natural laws of supply and demand; in one way or another we have been setting ourselves to thwart nature. Nature has been warning us to hold off, but we have only meddled the more, and we have been beaten accordingly in the unequal conflict which we have gone out of our way to provoke.

We have no space for the numerous examples which Mr. Herbert Spencer brings forward to support his case. He shows, in detail, a great variety of subjects about which the State has interposed, and with no better result than to intensify the evils which it has attempted in vain to cure. Are the poor in our large towns badly housed? The mischief is traced to its source in worrying laws passed one after another in order to secure that they should be well housed. Are our working classes notorious for their improvidence? It is with the State that the blame rests, for it is the State which has so managed for them that they can feel safe in disregarding the future, and which has further enforced its bad lesson by compelling the provident to pay for the support of their improvident fellows. Instances to the same effect could be supplied almost without number. Turn where we will we find the same lessons thrust upon us. Uninstructed legislators have increased human suffering by their well-meant endeavours to mitigate it. They have checked progress by assuming the control of business which they have been unfit to manage, and which private enterprise could have managed perfectly well if it had been left to

itself. At the root of the mischief is an erroneous belief that all evils and all defects can be cured; that it is somebody's business to cure them, and that that somebody must be the State. This position Mr. Herbert Spencer controverts at all points. He shows the harm which has come of it, the mistaken views on which it rests, the incompetence of the power to which it teaches us to turn for help. His book exhibits two types of government—that which seeks to widen as far as possible the sphere of governmental interference, and that which seeks to narrow it, and he calls on us to choose between the two, warning us that if we choose wrongly we may be compelled to abide by our choice, and may find ourselves borne away by an increasing current which we have helped half unwittingly to swell.

But can we choose thus absolutely? Are there not large departments within which State interference is called for, and which cannot safely be left unregulated? Mr. Herbert Spencer has no love for the Factory Acts. Will he tell us that parents ought to be left free to turn their young children into wage-earning machines, or that employers have a right to buy such labour to just the extent to which they choose to use it and pay for it? He points to instances in which sanitary laws have failed or have done mischief. Is he of opinion, therefore, that every one is free to keep his premises as filthy as he may please, and that the law is neither to restrain him from being a common nuisance, nor to give him help if he wishes to do better?

Again, as to the extent of the danger which we incur by undue State interference, can it be really as great and as irremediable as Mr. Herbert Spencer tells us? The industrial life and the type of government corresponding to it have grown up under very grave discouragements. Is it likely that they will be swept away now as utterly as

Mr. Herbert Spencer fears? Can principles which made their way in ages which were opposed to them be deprived in this last quarter of the nineteenth century of a vantage-ground which they have made their own? We prefer to think that Mr. Herbert Spencer exaggerates the danger. But that there is danger we will not deny. It seems to us, indeed, to attach to modern life as inevitably as any of the evils which Mr. Herbert Spencer tells us we must accept as beyond cure. Each new class which we admit to the franchise must necessarily gain power before it can have gained experience. It learns, as other classes have done, by making mistakes and suffering from them. Our electoral body has not yet quite found out that it must pay for what the State does for it. A Government which rests on popular favour is forced by the conditions of its existence to make large promises of good. If it does not, it will be outbid by the Opposition. A modern political leader is thus tempted to be a clap-trap, shifty fellow, well skilled in party moves and misrepresentations, and not over careful about far-off or indirect results. These may very possibly not come in his time, or, if they do come, may be explained away. The fault is not with the politician but with the people. Rulers are what their subjects make them or suffer them to be. This is true everywhere. In a constitutionally governed country it is a little more obviously true than it is elsewhere. Mr. Herbert Spencer deals heavy blows to both parties in the joint transaction. English people may be badly governed, but they are as well governed as they deserve to be. They may have reverted to Toryism at home, but it is because they have favoured an unjust foreign policy calling for the concentration of power in the hands of their rulers, and opposed, therefore, to the development of free industrial life. To the rulers he is even more severe. He loses all patience as he compares their promises and their performances,

and as he recalls to mind the very slender personal qualification which they care either to possess or claim. An ignorant druggist who has given himself out for what he is not, and has poisoned his too trustful clients, is sent to prison as a matter of course. An ignorant politician does incalculably more mischief by meddling with business which he is unfit to touch, and by recommending measures which he ought to know can only be mischievous in their results. Why should he escape more lightly than his fellow-offender the druggist? Mr. Herbert Spencer sees no reason that he should.

We have done most insufficient justice to Mr. Herbert Spencer's book. The author is of the rare class which never throws away its words. To condense in such a case is to lose. The little volume before us is too full of thought and enters into too vast a variety of subjects to be dealt with adequately in a review. It is a hard morsel, but full both of flavour and nourishment. We commend it to our readers' very careful attention. It demands this, and it will repay it.

## XII.

### THE GOLDEN BOUGH<sup>1</sup>.

MR. FRAZER's book carries us back to early and pre-historic times. The opening scene is laid among the Alban Hills, at the Arician Grove, the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis. Here, from immemorial time, a strange and obscure custom had prevailed, and had lasted on to the days of Imperial Rome, long after its origin and meaning had been forgotten. The priesthood of the goddess, a most important office, conferring on its holder the kingly title of Rex Nemorensis, could be held only by a runaway slave. He must be a murderer too, for he gained his place only when he had killed his predecessor; and he was in constant fear of being deposed and killed in turn by some fresh aspirant to his insecure and dangerous rank. He remained, therefore, always sword in hand, on the watch for his expected assailant. So far all authorities are in agreement. Some add, further, that his appointed place was that of guardian of a sacred tree, from which no bough was to be broken, and that as long as the tree was intact his life was safe. But if some new runaway could succeed in breaking off a bough he gained the right thereby of fighting the priest in single combat,

<sup>1</sup> *The Golden Bough: a Study in Comparative Religion*, by J. G. Frazer, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. In 2 vols. London: Macmillan & Co., 1890.

or more probably of setting upon him unawares, and when he had killed him he became priest and king in his stead. It is certain that the shrine of the goddess was in high repute throughout Italy. It was especially frequented by women desirous either of children or of an easy delivery. A perpetual fire seems to have been kept burning in her sanctuary. At her annual festival the entire grove was lit up by torches, and a feast was held, at which a young kid, wine, and cakes were served up on platters of leaves. Fire, vegetation, and the reproductive powers of nature thus stand out prominently in connexion with the worship of the goddess.

At the same place two minor deities were honoured, the nymph Egeria and Virbius, whom tradition reported to have been Hippolytus, restored to life by the skill of Æsculapius, and hidden by Diana in her grove, where he reigned a forest king and the first priest at her shrine. By some authorities Virbius is identified with the sun.

Now in all this there is much that needs to be explained. The Arician custom is at once strange, and in many ways peculiar to the place. The questions which suggest themselves about it are—what was the nature of the priest's office? whom or what did he represent? why was he called a king? why was he a slave? and why must each fresh claimant have plucked a bough from the sacred tree before he could attack the actual holder of the office? On no one of these points can a direct answer be found. Such myths and traditions as there are give no help whatever. There is no reason to suppose that they have so much as a substratum of truth. One and all, they have been invented by an afterthought to explain matters far older than themselves, the real original purpose of which has been forgotten or has been obscured by a change of creed, and has thus lost the importance which at first attached to it. Mr. Frazer's method of procedure

is to bring together proofs of early customs and beliefs which may be combined into a consistent whole, and may explain, at least probably, the original meaning of the Arician custom and the later modifications which were made in it. He shows, first, by an almost needless accumulation of evidence, that primitive man had no notion of the fixity of natural laws. He held, on the contrary, that the weather, for instance, and the course and character of the seasons were very largely within his own control, and he had many fanciful ways of his own for exerting a supposed influence over them. The supreme power over them was frequently thought to reside in some chosen person, who was more or less held responsible for the use he was assumed to have made of it. With the life of this great functionary the growth of the crops, the course of the seasons, and the maintenance of the entire order of things were held to be bound up. Mr. Frazer further shows that among many races, and certainly among Aryan races, tree-worship was one of the most early and best-established forms of religious observance. The tree was thought to be the dwelling-place of the tree-spirit, and this spirit was very commonly represented by a living man, who was looked upon as its embodiment and as gifted to the full with its vast and all-pervading powers. The sacred tree was often known and addressed as a king, so that it was quite natural that its human representative should have had the same title conferred upon him. Mr. Frazer suggests, accordingly, that the Arician custom rose from such beliefs as the above. The Arician priest was an incarnation of the tree-spirit, and as such would have been credited with the miraculous powers of his divine original. He could send rain and sunshine; the growth of the crops, the multiplication of the flocks and herds, the parturition of women—in a word, the beneficent and



reproductive forces of nature would be under his control and dependent on his life. All this, strange as it sounds, is confirmed by ample proof of the prevalence of like beliefs in almost every country. They are found in some places as survivals; the belief has been lost, the custom based upon it has been preserved. Our own Jack-in-the-Green and our harvest-home festivities are referred to by Mr. Frazer as unsuspected instances of this. Elsewhere they exist in their old form and in full original force, and make it likely that in early prehistoric Latium the creed and habits of primitive man may have found their natural outcome in the rites of the Arician Grove.

But here a difficulty occurs. Since the life of the Arician priest was of such supreme importance, how came it that his licensed murder was a part of the Arician custom? An explanation must be sought after the same method as before. In this case, as in numerous others like it, it was held to be necessary that the divine priest should preserve in unabated force the energy of full manhood. If he grew old or feeble, the reproductive powers of nature would share his decay, and a general sterility would supervene. Against this danger, therefore, a special safeguard was contrived. The divine man was not suffered to grow old. His spirit and influence were detached from his body by his death, and were transferred in their unabated vigour to some new frame, and were thence passed on in turn to another and yet another. In this way the succession was kept up; the divine man was maintained in perpetual strength, and a fit habitation was always provided for the indwelling deity to occupy. On such terms as these has the joint office of priest and king been held in many regions and from immemorial time. But the death of the priest-king was not everywhere and always carried out in fact. In course of years, as men's manners became less rude, and as human life

was held in more value, the old custom was modified. Sometimes an image was burnt or destroyed when the appointed day came round, and the human life was spared. Sometimes a temporary transfer of office was made to some new and less worthy occupant, and, in place of the royal priest, a stranger or a slave or a criminal was immolated. We may suppose that in the Arician rites a like modification had at some time been made. There was a human victim still, but it was not a freeman, but a slave. Mr. Frazer thinks it probable that, slave or freeman, he was originally put to death at the close of his year's office, burnt, dead or alive, at the Arician Diana's festival. The custom, as we read of it in historical times, had been so modified as to give him a chance of escape. The essential point was safe. As long as the Rex Nemorensis could hold his own against his assailants, he might be credited with retaining his full physical force. *Regna tenent fortisque manu, pedibusque fugaces*. But when the Arician priest was neither strong nor fleet of foot, he must accept his doom; and the tree-spirit, dislodged from the person of its representative, must become incarnate immediately in some more vigorous and more worthy frame. How all this may have been in the earliest times of the institution we have no means of knowing; whether the priest was suffered to escape by the substitution of a slave when the day of death came round, or whether, as in Mexico, the doomed victim was carefully watched and not allowed to escape. The strange thing is that a priesthood on the Arician terms should at any time have been attractive even for a slave, and that willing competitors should have been found for it. But it seems certain that in later days, about which alone we have any positive information, the danger of assault was not what it may have formerly been. As we might well expect, the competition had ceased to be keen. In the reign of Caligula, the Arician

priest had had so long a term, and had been so long left unattacked, that the Emperor for a freak gave orders for him to be attacked and killed. The need of such a mandate is some proof of the general security by which the office had come to be surrounded.

Of the two minor deities who were worshipped at the Arician Grove, the nymph Egeria seems to have been the creation of a cognate but independent personifying fancy. Virbius, as the first priest, calls for special notice here. The legend that he had been restored to life may have been an expression in legendary terms of the old belief in the continuity of his priestly office, each new priest being possessed by the same spirit as his predecessor, and thus being to all intents and purposes the self-same person. That Virbius was also identified with the sun is explained by the obvious similarity between the sun as the great source of life and growth, and the divine tree to which like functions were attributed. As the sun governs the seasons, so too did the tree-spirit, and so too did the priest in whom the tree-spirit dwelt. On the plucking of the sacred branch, Mr. Frazer gives reasons for supposing that the sacred tree was the oak, the sacred branch the mistletoe growing on it, and like the priest a representative or second home of the tree-spirit's life. We have no space for the long and somewhat circuitous train of evidence which he brings in support of his conclusion. His book will be attractive for all readers. The serious student will find in it a comprehensive survey of some of the most obscure and interesting problems in early religious faith. To those who read for amusement, it will offer an ample store of world-wide myths and legends, and fairy tales and curious customs. They may begin by being amused, and may be led on from the fable to the moral, from the graphic descriptions to the theories which they are introduced to illustrate.

### XIII.

#### SMOKIANA<sup>1</sup>.

MR. PRITCHETT'S book on tobacco-pipes comes before us with a defiant title-page. The author dedicates it to the memory of that royal enemy of smoking, King James I, and to the anti-tobacco fraternity of the present day ; and he goes on to remark in his preface on the very small amount of success which the opponents of tobacco, ancient or modern, have had, and to furnish proofs all through his book of the world-wide prevalence of the practice which they have vainly endeavoured to discountenance and put down. Mr. Pritchett gives us pictures from all parts of what he terms the pipe-family, used for tobacco smoking, except in one or two countries where the place of tobacco is taken by opium or by wild hemp. The most majestic of them all is the great hookah of India, which dominates the entire page. The best known are the short cutty and the Broseley churchwarden pipe. Broseley, we are told, became famous for its pipes at the earliest possible date. We have specimens of its work in clay from A. D. 1590. Mr. Pritchett fixes the early part of the present century as the time when the fully developed churchwarden pipe was in vogue. It is still to be found, he adds, in the country, but the implied limitation of its range is surely an unjust slur on the degeneracy of modern taste. But turn where

<sup>1</sup> *Smokiana*, by R. T. Pritchett. Quaritch, 1890.

we will, we have still the pipe with us. In one form or another it is ubiquitous. The Dutch pipe, with its long stem and capacious bowl, comes nearest to the Broseley in shape, but we see it ornamented on occasion with silver and with gold leaves—a species of decoration which the severe simplicity of the Broseley disdains. The German pipe marks a further development. It has a large porcelain bowl with a detachable stem some four feet in length. The Danish pipe has a close resemblance to the German. It is of two sizes. The house pipe has a stem some eight inches longer than the German, and a bowl not quite so large. The short pipe, in use by the outdoor worker, makes up for its diminished length in stem by the enormous size of its bowl. It is so constructed as to hold a full allowance of tobacco for the working man's day. Of French pipes we have no separate notice. There is just an incidental remark on the Fiolets of a former day, but of the briar-root pipe and of the fragrant *vrai merisier* we strangely hear nothing. Algeria has a page to itself. Its pipes, with their red clay bowls, are like the Turkish in material and in shape. We have also pipes from all parts of Asia, Africa, and North and South America. It would be difficult in many cases to guess the purpose which they were intended to serve. The East Indian pipe of red clay—the worst and roughest material in use anywhere—looks to the eye more like a bad imitation of a tea-pot than a pipe. In point of fact it belongs to the hookah species, and it is constructed accordingly as a vessel for holding water. Mr. Stanley's expedition has brought to light some curious specimens of pipes from Equatorial Africa. Surgeon Parke has made careful drawings of them. The simplest specimen of a rough and ready pipe is that used by the natives of the Aruwihimi and Ituri forest. Its stem is a perforated banana stalk. The bowl is a banana leaf rolled up into a funnel, like a grocer's paper, and inserted

into a hole cut in the stem, and the apparatus is complete. The one part of the world in which no native pipes and no native smokers have been found is the Australian mainland. Its one solitary specimen of a pipe, formed out of the foot of an emu, is not of aboriginal workmanship, but is a product of the higher intelligence of Malays or of Chinese immigrants.

Mr. Pritchett's book, to which he gives the title of 'Smokiana,' tells us a great deal about pipes, and a little about tobacco, and about contrivances for getting a light. But of cigars and of cigarettes he says nothing. Possibly the cigarette, as an unworthy modern hybrid, has been left out on its merits. But the cigar may surely claim a place. Its manufacture takes rank among the earliest and noblest uses to which the tobacco leaf can be put. It is not, perhaps, as widely known as the pipe, but it does not come far short of its more vulgar rival in this respect. The unfortunate fact about it is that if it sometimes rises immeasurably above the pipe, at other times it sinks as far below it. Pipe-tobacco, as we know it in this country, is of fairly measurable quality. It can be had on demand in any one of its very numerous varieties, and it may generally be trusted to be what it professes to be. We cannot say this about cigars. They are good, bad, and indifferent. A good cigar is an exceptional and rare prize. It is for the few, not for the many, for it is only the few who know it or who value it. Money will not command it, except indeed where the purchaser can satisfy the seller that he has a right to what he is asking for, and that he is capable of detecting the difference between good and bad. If he fails to do this he will be put off with a cigar of inferior brand, and he will be charged a price which will enable him to please himself with the belief that he has got hold of the genuine thing. Strictly speaking, he will have been cheated, but he has brought his fate on himself, and he

has, after all said, no *locus standi* for complaint. It may be urged further that since there are not enough good cigars in the world for everybody, it is better that what there are should be reserved for the right men. There are other departments in which the same sort of rule holds, with less cogent reason for it. Charles Lamb gives it as an admitted maxim among book fanciers that a book belongs properly to the man who can make the best use of it, and that he can reclaim it, without offence, from the shelf of any previous owner. It is a question of casuistry whether and how far the same holds good about cigars. We offer no opinion about it. We say only that if a man pays a long price for a bad or an indifferent cigar, and is satisfied with his purchase, it is proof positive that a good cigar would have been wasted upon him, and that while his taste remains thus undeveloped it is hard to see that he has been wronged. *Volenti non fit injuria*, and he has been a consenting party at every stage of the transaction, from the purchase to the final whiff.

Of the different kinds of tobacco in use in the various countries of the world Mr. Pritchett says nothing from what we may term the smoker's point of view. He offers us pipes in abundance, but we have hardly any information about their probable or customary contents. The Chinese, we are told, smoke opium—a practice which Mr. Pritchett does not think injurious to them in health. The inhabitants of Zanzibar smoke wild hemp or bhang. With these exceptions, to which some others might have been added, the tobacco leaf is the thing smoked. There are many varieties of it, and we have a brief account of them, with their distribution and their botanical names, and with some pictures of the growing plant. But beyond this Mr. Pritchett does not attempt to go. He writes of Dutch and German smokers, and he has a word on French pipes. But what kind of stuff these people burn in their pipes is

not so much as hinted at. The English traveller on the Continent will soon gain the information for himself. Go where he may, he will find it simply impossible to obtain what he will dignify with the name of tobacco. The German and Dutch forms are better than the Italian and the French, but we can say no more than this for them. France we are inclined to put as the lowest among civilized tobacco-consuming countries. The hand of the Government makes itself felt all through. The three kinds of foreign tobacco which are admitted into France are purchased on Government account, and they are about equally bad. The native-grown tobacco is wholly wanting in fragrance, and it has the doubtful merit of being very strong, or, as we should term it, very rank. Care is further taken that no one with capital at command shall be suffered to open a tobacco shop. The whole scheme works out as we might expect. There is small choice anywhere, and only between bad and worse. It would perhaps do something to reconcile the English working-man to his lot in life if he had the means of comparing his position with that of his fellow in France. The Englishman has not only higher wages and shorter hours of work, but he can also purchase, at threepence an ounce, a kind of tobacco, by no means of the highest quality, but nevertheless far superior to any which either a French workman or a French millionaire can hope for in his own country. We do not know what value our working-classes set on a common privilege which comes to them as a matter of course, but we believe there would be a rebellion to-morrow if it were taken away and they were compelled to smoke *caporal*, nor should we dare to say that it had not been abundantly provoked.



## XIV.

### BIMETALLISM.

AFTER all that has been said and written in praise of bimetallic currency, and of the happy changes which are to follow from it, there seems room for doubt whether it can ever be put to the trial. If Mr. Giffen is in the right, the mere prospect of it will be enough. If ever it becomes clear that a bimetallic currency is to be legalized, men with money on deposit, or with money owing to them, will not wait for the change. They will begin to call in their money while they can get it in the shape they wish for, and they will thus guard themselves in advance against being put off with any inferior stuff. In plain words, our whole complex system of credit will be endangered, and we should be on the eve of a commercial crisis such as the world has never known. It will be worth while, therefore, to look into the matter, and to see, if we can, whether the bimetallic system can really do the mischief with which Mr. Giffen tells us it will be credited by those who have anything to lose and whose interests it will touch. Our moneyed classes are not likely to be frightened with false fire, but it will be a serious business if they see reason to take alarm.

There are some points on which bimetallists are in agreement. They say, for example, that general prices are low ; that the reason is, not that the low-priced goods

have fallen in value, but that gold has become more valuable, or, in other words, has appreciated; that these low prices are the cause of trade depression, and are mischievous; that to rehabilitate silver would raise prices, and would thus serve to cure or mitigate the trade depression. Now these statements hang together, and correct or incorrect, form part of a consistent theory. I purpose, presently, to examine them. There are other points on which bimetallists do not agree. On the ratio, for example, which they wish to see established between gold and silver, they are in marked and notorious disagreement. A recent discussion which was carried on in the columns of the *Times* will stand as proof of this. M. Cernuschi insists on a return to the old ratio of 1 to 15½. Others have proposed a higher ratio, more nearly in accordance with the present market value of the two metals. Others hold that there is no need to have one common ratio, but that each country can fix a ratio for itself, no matter how different from the ratio or ratios of its neighbours. The more reasonable ones say that this question of ratio must stand over for settlement at an International Monetary Conference, and that we shall then be able to agree on a ratio to the general satisfaction of all parties. I say nothing against this view, nor do I raise the question whether the ratio agreed upon could be maintained. The further and more vital point is in what way the proposed change in the currency would operate to affect prices, and what good or mischief might be expected from it.

On this point most bimetallists speak as clearly as we could wish. The change which they would make in the currency is to have the twofold effect of raising prices as a remedy for trade depression, and of relieving debtors from the additional and unfair burden which the appreciation of gold has laid upon them. That it would raise

prices may be admitted, and that it would do this in just the degree in which it served to debase the currency. This is a phrase which bimetallists do not like, but it exactly fits the case. Their new money is to raise prices, because it will be of less intrinsic value than our present standard coin; so that the rise in prices which it is to bring about will be no more than a juggling contrivance for doing business by the use of an increased number of counters, each of them worth less than the counters now in use.

Then, as to the relief of debtors—this is a bimetallic promise which could be kept. We have pleasant pictures shown us of the grasping usurer, whose nets have been well spread, and who finds himself disappointed of a good part of his catch: of the idle *rentier*, who has been living at his ease, taking the benefits of a progress to which he contributes nothing, and whose means of enjoyment bimetallism is effectively to curtail. The pressure of mortgages is to be lightened, and the borrowing classes, the pioneers of progress, are to have their reward by being allowed to discharge themselves on the easy terms which a bimetallic currency would offer.

It is not to be denied that these would be very real changes, well within the power of bimetallism to bring about, and very agreeable to those who would profit by them. If objections are raised on the point of justice or good faith or the obligation of contracts, bimetallists have a ready defence. Their line is that since our present currency has been artificially raised in value it is no more than fair that it should be artificially debased, and so brought back to its natural and proper level, and they point to the fall in prices as proof of the alleged rise in the value of gold. I shall endeavour presently to show that the proof does not hold good. But let us look first at another side of the picture. The proposed debasement of

the currency will injuriously affect all who possess money or who have a claim to it. It is the great merit of the proposal that it will do this; that the working man who has put his money into the Savings Bank or has purchased a Government annuity will find himself robbed of a good part of his provision against illness and accident and old age; that if he has used the facilities offered him for investing in Consols, he has thereby joined the class who are to be losers under the new currency, and that he has trusted a Government which, like the witches in Macbeth, will keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the hope.

But this is a very small part of the mischief which these bimetallists would bring about. Besides the loss inflicted on the whole creditor class, on large and on small annuitants and stock-holders, and on all persons with fixed incomes, we must consider the general confusion of accounts which the debasement of the currency would involve. Our whole system of prices would need, at once, to be recast. Wholesale dealers and experienced men of business might perhaps escape unhurt, or might even contrive to pick up something in the scramble. In retail trade the trouble would be more keenly felt, and the poor and the ignorant would be the most certain to suffer from it. The poor man's penny (for which Mr. Gladstone would go to the stake) would be no longer what it is now. How far it would shrink in value it would be impossible to calculate beforehand. But since, *ex hypothesi*, the pound sterling is to be debased, it follows that the penny, the two hundred and fortieth part of a pound, would be correspondingly debased. Now, the penny is an important coin. It enters as a factor into innumerable retail transactions, all possible on the assumption that the value of the penny remains what it is, but no longer possible when the bimetallist lie-penny has been put into its place.

There would be an end at once to penny omnibus fares, to penny newspapers, and to penny postage, when the slender margin of profit which they now yield had been struck off by the debasement of the penny coin. And as with pennies, so too with sixpences and shillings. They would all lose some part of their present purchasing power—it is of the essence of the scheme that they should—so that there must be a re-arrangement of prices all round, in retail transactions generally with a consequent amount of trouble and confusion which it would be hardly possible to over-estimate, and this, not once for all, since it would not be at once that the full effect of the proposed change would be felt. Some weight, too, must be given to the fact that England is, in the main, a creditor country, and would lose therefore by a reduction in the standard under which the debts due to it are to be paid. But whatever may be the interest of England in this matter, it is urged, quite correctly, that the interest of the Indian Government lies in just the opposite direction, and that to India, as a debtor country, a debasement of our gold currency would come as a very welcome relief. In other words, the bimetallists in a philanthropic mood, or when hard pressed to find something to say for themselves, propose to disarrange our whole system of currency, in order thus indirectly to reduce the public indebtedness of India to England. It is a generous thought, no doubt, but a somewhat roundabout method of procedure. A straightforward reduction of the debt would answer all ends for the debtor country, and would be much less troublesome to the creditor country. I do not say that the debt ought to be reduced, but only that if the thing is to be done, the bimetallists have chosen a singularly absurd way of doing it.

Again, from a somewhat different point of view; it is urged, in favour of bimetallism, that it would tend to

deprive the Indian people of an unfair advantage over this country which they are assumed at present to enjoy. The argument, if I understand it rightly, is as follows. Prices have fallen in England but not in India; they have fallen as measured in gold, but not as measured in silver money. The result is that while the English farmer gets less than he used for his wheat, his rival, the Indian farmer, gets the same price as before, and can thus go on growing wheat on terms which the unfortunate English farmer is no longer able to command. But it is obvious to remark that if this state of things is due, as bimetallists assert, to the recent appreciation of gold, the English farmer is at no real disadvantage. He gets less money, but not less value, since the coin in which he is paid is worth so much more that the fall in nominal prices is of no consequence to him at all. But in order to account for this fall in agricultural prices, there is no need to resort to the theory that it has been due to an appreciation of gold. Whether gold has appreciated or not, there are abundant reasons why agricultural prices should have declined. The fall set in with the competition of the Western American States: it became more marked when India entered as a new competitor in our home markets. The development of Argentina as a wheat-producing country came as a last crushing blow, and it has been felt severely not only by the English, but by the *fons et origo mali*, the Western American farmer. If the truth, then, is that agricultural prices as measured in silver have remained fairly constant because silver and wheat have fallen both together, owing in both cases to a very large increase in production, it is clear that the difficulties of the English wheat-grower, real and formidable as they are, have been set down by the bimetallists to the wrong cause. He suffers in pocket not because gold has appreciated, but because his staple

product has declined, so that to depress the value of gold and to raise the value of silver would do nothing to help him thus far. It is much the same with our cotton and jute mill-owners. Their late customers, in both hemispheres, are becoming more and more able to manufacture the goods they need, and even to supply somewhat more than their own wants ; and whether we like the outlook or not, we must expect to find that their rivalry will increase and will extend. In these circumstances the bimetallists propose to tinker our currency by way of relief to trade and agriculture. But that this would be a help to either interest, or would give us an advantage as competitors in the markets of the world, it is simply idle to suppose. It deals with a symptom and does not touch the cause—an unsound method of procedure in whatever department it may be tried. The notion that it is possible to revive trade and agriculture by changing the money-counters which traders and agriculturists employ implies a complete misconception of the nature and functions of money, which a little study of the subject might, perhaps, help to clear away. All trade, home and foreign alike, is barter in the last analysis, and whether the barter is effected by the means of few counters or of many is of no consequence at all. However much the currency were debased, the comparative values of different classes of goods would remain exactly the same, and if the farmer got more money for his wheat, or the Lancashire manufacturer for his cotton, they would each be forced to pay more for their purchases in just the degree in which they had been gainers by the artificial rise in the price of what they had to sell. In an indirect way, indeed, both farmer and manufacturer might get some benefit, whether as tenants with unexpired leases or as employers of labour, since a debasement of the currency would enable them to pay rent and wages with less cost to themselves.

But this, though a bad turn for landlords and working men, would be no more than a temporary relief. It would last only until the leases had run out, and until the workmen had discovered that their real wages had been reduced. Perhaps, too, if a rise in the value of silver and a fall in the value of gold put the finances of India on a better footing by lessening the real burden of the Indian public debt, there might be no need for the much debated Indian cotton duties. But the question may well be asked whether such one-sided or contingent advantages would be worth the price which must be given for them, and whether the possible export of a little more cotton stuff to India would be a fair equivalent for the loss and muddle and general confusion of accounts into which bimetallists of every type are casting about for the most promising method of plunging us.

There have been other plans, too, put forward by bimetallists as likely to be of great use, though less meritorious than a direct debasement of the currency. The state of alarm into which the House of Commons has been thrown by 'the constant fluctuations and the growing divergence in the relative value of gold and silver' has naturally raised their hopes. The resolution passed by the House seems to them to imply that something or other must be done, and since this generally means that something foolish will be done, the bimetallists are exultant, and recognize that their chance has come. That this country should join in an international bimetallic league is, of course, what they would like best. But if this is not to be, the next best thing is that the price of silver should be raised, as it might be in several ways; as, for example, by an international agreement to make large yearly purchases of silver, or by the United States and the countries of the Latin Union being induced to unite with India in re-opening their mints to the free coinage of



silver. If the purchase plan were carried out it is certain that there would be created at once so large a demand for silver that the price could not fail to rise very considerably. This would be the immediate effect. The next question is, how long would the rise last? As surely as an increased demand serves to raise price, so surely does a rise in price operate as a stimulus to production. To the possible production of silver there seems literally to be no assignable limit. The history of the Sherman Act and of its results is to the point here. This Act, which bound the United States Treasury to purchase four and a half million ounces of silver every month, was hailed by the bimetallists as a wise and beneficial measure. It caused, as they expected, a marked rise in the price of silver for a time, but only for a time. As silver rose, the production of silver so increased that the price fell to an even lower level than that at which it had previously stood. On the repeal of the Act there was a further fall, and though since that date a good many silver mines have been closed and production has consequently been reduced, we may look with certainty for a fresh start, and a fresh influx of silver, as soon as any new rise in price comes as an encouragement to the mine-owners to flood the market once more. We should thus have wasted money in purchasing what we do not need, but as long as no measures were taken for forcing the useless metal into circulation, there would have been no great harm done.

Again, a re-opening of foreign mints for the free coinage of silver could hardly fail to cause a considerable displacement of gold. The cheaper metal would, of course, drive out and supplant the dearer one, and the consenting countries would be left with a good store of silver on their hands and with not much gold. But it is very doubtful whether, in the present state of the silver market, the needful consents could be obtained. England would have

to join in the adventure before anything could be done. Foreign bimetallists have been in the habit of looking on her as their proper prey—as the country on which they hope to unload the silver for which they have no use—so that a scheme in which England herself was not involved would have comparatively little to recommend it to them.

I will come now to the great stronghold of the bimetalists—the alleged appreciation of gold. This they assert to have been due chiefly to the closing of the French mints in 1873 to the free coinage of silver, and from that date to this to have proceeded at an accelerated pace, while silver has no less markedly depreciated. But this far-reaching action of France they do not attempt to account for. They are satisfied with dwelling on its results, and with contrasting the comparative stability of the ratio between the two metals under the influence of the bimetallic system, with the wide and increasing divergence which has followed since it was given up. Into this part of the question it is not necessary to enter. What the bimetalists have omitted to tell us, Mr. Giffen fortunately has supplied. He has shown that the ratio prior to 1873 was by no means as stable as it has been said to be; that, on the contrary, it fluctuated from time to time, and that France became practically a silver or a gold using country according as the one metal or the other chanced to be the cheaper in the metal market. He has shown, too, that it was not owing to a mere freak or fancy that France ceased to be bimetallic. There were sound reasons for the change. The fall in the value of silver rendered it impossible for France to maintain the old ratio, except at a cost which she was not minded to incur. The bimetalists may thus be credited with putting the cart before the horse, with explaining the fall in silver as due to a change in French policy which was itself preceded by the fall, and was in point of fact caused by it.

On the alleged appreciation of gold, the bimetallists have much to say. They offer in proof of it the undoubted fact that the prices of several important classes of goods have fallen very considerably. Wheat, during the year 1895 was lower than it ever was before; the price and rent of agricultural land in England have fallen with the fall in wheat and in other cereals; and in cotton, in copper, in iron, in wool, and in tea there has been a very great shrinkage of value. But there are two sides to the story. If some prices have fallen, others have no less markedly risen. In ivory, e.g. in whalebone, in coffee, and in tobacco there has not only been no fall, but there has been a very considerable rise of price<sup>1</sup>. To the fall in agricultural land, the rise in town holdings may be quoted as a set-off. If, therefore, we follow the argument of the bimetallists, we shall be forced to say that there has been, at one and the same time, an appreciation and a depreciation of gold, and that it has appreciated in country districts and has depreciated in towns. But it would, perhaps, be safer to assume that where there has been an enormous increase of production, as in the case of wheat, of silver, and of wool, or a decline in the demand, as in the case of agricultural land, gold prices have quite naturally declined, and that where the opposite conditions have prevailed they have no less naturally advanced.

We may add, further, that since exchange value depends on the cost of production, or, in the last analysis, on the

<sup>1</sup> In the *Economist* of February 16, 1895, there were some interesting tables showing in detail the movement of prices during the last half-century. On the increase in the production of silver, the *Statist* of February 16 quoted a table from the *New York Chronicle*, showing that the yearly production had increased by leaps and bounds, until in 1893 it amounted to 161,170,000 ounces, or more than three times what it had been in 1872. In 1894, after the repeal of the Sherman Act, it fell to 149,100,000 ounces. It is not claimed for these figures that they are more than approximately correct.

amount of labour which must be employed in production, it follows that, if gold has appreciated as much as the bimetallists assert that it has, very much more labour must be given now than was given before the appreciation in exchange for the same amount of gold. But of this, certainly, there are no such signs as we should expect, so that we may quite fairly call on the bimetallists to discover them and to point them out if they can. That, since 1873, there has been some appreciation of gold, I am not prepared either to deny or to admit. I say only that the bimetallists have not made out their case.

It is astonishing with what light hearts, and with what slender evidence to support them, the bimetallists are pressing their doctrine. Nothing seems to stagger them. They are ready at a moment's notice to turn the whole business world upside down, to sponge off a good part of national and private debts, to do away with a system of currency which has served us well for more than three-quarters of a century, and to put into its place another system which broke down hopelessly, not a quarter of a century ago, on the first real strain. But when they are asked to explain themselves, and to give reasons for their bimetallic faith, the paucity and poverty of their arguments contrast strangely with the enormous claims which they are making on the public confidence. They have positively nothing to urge, except the kind of stuff which suits well enough for a declamatory flourish on the hustings, but is out of place in serious discussion anywhere. When this is exhausted, they have no reserves to bring up. So few, indeed, are their arguments, that they must be eked out with irrelevant matter in order to make a decent show, and must be twisted about and made to do duty several times over, like a stage army and with about the same fighting force. If it were not for the Report of the Currency Commission, they would be indeed in poor

case. It is to this Report that they turn when they are hard pressed, and it certainly supplies them with some *ad hominem* arguments, against their most formidable foes. How some parts of that Report ever came to be signed by some of the Commissioners it is not easy, at first sight, to explain. In one way only can it be accounted for. The Commission, it will be remembered, was a curious, nondescript body, containing some experts, and a good many other members who by no stretch of courtesy could be so termed. The bimetallists were well represented on it, and they took a leading part throughout. Is it unreasonable to suggest that the more sound members of the Commission were at last so bewildered by the incessant nonsense which was daily dinned into their ears, that their judgement was for the time disturbed, and that they thus passively assented to conclusions which they have since recognized to be indefensible and absurd? We can find instances to the point. The case is not unlike that of a doctor in charge of a mad asylum, whose mental balance is not unfrequently upset, and who is thus in danger of coming down for a time to the intellectual level of his patients.

We will look next at the claim put in for bimetallism, that it would keep the standard of values more uniform than it is under a monometallic system, or would at least serve to limit the range of fluctuation. Closely connected with this is the vexed question whether the bimetallic ratio could, in any circumstances, be maintained. I see no reason to doubt that it could be. Let us assume the universal agreement about it on which bimetallists insist, and let the ratio fixed upon be either M. Cernuschi's ratio of  $15\frac{1}{2}$  to 1, or Professor Foxwell's of 20 to 1. The result in either case will be to create an enormous demand for silver and a corresponding stimulus to its production. Silver will be coined and will come into circulation, not

necessarily to the displacement of gold, but until gold coin has been brought down in value so as to agree with the ratio, or in other words until gold has lost one-half or one-third of its present purchasing power. When this point has been reached, there will be no longer any special encouragement to the production of one metal or of the other, and the purpose of the bimetallists will have been attained. The currency will have been well debased, and will be subject thenceforward only to such accidental fluctuations as may be caused by extensive new gold or silver discoveries. Fluctuations, however, there will almost certainly be. The chances are that in the downward race between the two metals, it is silver which will play the leading part, and that the process of debasement will go on until nominal prices have so risen that it is no longer worth while for the silver mine-owners to draw further on their almost inexhaustible stores. A capital prospect this for Mexico and Bolivia, for Nevada and Colorado, but a very poor prospect for England, which will be a sufferer equally while the process of debasement is going on and when the currency nadir has been at last reached. Prices will have been raised, no doubt, just as they were raised after each fresh issue of French *assignats*, and with about the same benefit to agriculture and trade.

Professor Foxwell has much to say on the convenience of international money, which would pass current everywhere alike; and this, he says, we can have only under an international bimetallic system. Its convenience is not to be denied. There would be one factor less for foreign merchants to take into account, and one trouble the less for travellers in foreign countries. But though, without bimetallism, we cannot have a perfect international money, we could have some approach to it at once between countries with a single gold standard. But this we have not got, and to all appearances are not likely to get. The

new German coinage was purposely so contrived as not to be exactly interchangeable with any foreign money. There are many other matters, too, much more easy of arrangement, about which an international agreement would be of use. We have not yet a common time, a common longitude, or even a common calendar; and a common money may with reason be set down as a more distant dream than any of them. Meanwhile we must manage as we can without it, since it is not to be had unless we adopt bimetallism first, and very probably not then. It would thus be a case not of venturing a sprat to catch a salmon, but rather of venturing a salmon on the off-chance of catching a problematical sprat.

How comes it, then, that in some quarters bimetallism has got a hold on the public mind, that farmers and manufacturers are looking to it with hope, and are not alone in their willingness to risk the great plunge from the known to the unknown, from order to monetary chaos? The truth seems to be that certain sections of the public are in a very credulous temper. There has been a long period of depression in trade and agriculture, and there is no near prospect of improvement in either of them. Things, it is believed, can hardly be much worse than they are, so that any change is welcome, any cure is trusted. We must add, too, that the knavish wish to escape paying just debts may have helped not a little to swell the ranks of the bimetallists. It is a fine thing to be able to cheat with a clear conscience, and with no loss of character; and bimetallism can make this possible, however little else it may be worth. Nor is it undeserving of remark that the case for bimetallism has never been fully stated by its advocates. A part has always been kept back; and while nothing has been said about loss and injury to follow, large promises have been made of profit which would have been seen at once to be

delusive if the balance had been fairly held. Mr. Chaplin, for example, rests his case mainly on the fact that bimetallism would raise prices; others are satisfied with insisting that the bimetallic ratio could be maintained, or that falling prices are bad for trade, as they most unquestionably are when they are caused by foreign rivalry and increased foreign production, in which case, however, bimetallism could be of no help. There is one point in particular which is most carefully kept out of sight—the effect which a debasement of the currency would have in enabling employers of labour to pay lower wages without making any apparent reduction in the rate. We are told that it would be good for trade, but we are not told exactly why or in what way it would be good. If the working classes once find out what this fine phrase ‘good for trade’ means to them, there will be no more chance for the bimetallists and for their cherished scheme. I do not say this is the most solid objection to bimetallism, I mention it only as the most studiously concealed.

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NOTE.—See a very interesting article in the *Revue des deux Mondes* for September 15, 1897, ‘La hausse du blé,’ by Monsieur R. G. Levy, commenting on the bimetallist fallacy that the price of wheat depends on the price of silver. He shows from the record of 1897 that it is simply a question of supply and demand, and that while silver has sunk to a ratio of 1 to 40 the price of wheat has simultaneously risen 67 per cent.



## XV.

### THE GOLD STANDARD DEFENCE ASSOCIATION.

1895.

THE agitation in favour of some form of bimetallism has gained such strength in several countries, and has been pushed forward so vigorously in this country, that the supporters of our established currency have taken alarm, none too soon, and have set themselves in earnest to combat it. The letter, addressed in May, 1895, to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer by the leading merchants and bankers in the city of London, gave a statement in general terms of the opinions entertained by an important body of men, who have an indisputable right to be heard, and who declared themselves opposed to any change in our present monetary system. This first step has since been followed by the formation of the Gold Standard Defence Association, under the presidency of Mr. Bertram Currie, and by the publication of a series of papers, issued under the sanction of the association, 'to explain the principles which should govern a sound currency and a trustworthy standard of value, and to show that, while our present standard is in conformity with those principles, the proposals of the bimetallists are in conflict with them.'

The association, it will be seen, has undertaken an arduous task. That our present system is in possession of the field is a cause both of weakness and of strength—of strength since it is clearly incumbent on those opposed

to it to prove that they have something better to substitute for it, and of weakness since the mere fact of its existence enables its adversaries to charge it with being the cause of any evils which may chance to be going on concurrently with it. If there is a trade depression, if profits are low, if agriculture is in a bad way, it is taken as proof positive that our currency system must be at the bottom of the whole mischief. So forward comes the bimetallist, with his large promises and his confident assertions, and his disregard of the real lessons of the past. It is no easy matter to bring him to book. He is a very Proteus in the number and variety of his transformations. If he is refuted in one shape, straightway he assumes another and makes a fresh start. This, then, is another difficulty in the way of the Gold Standard Defence Associates. Their own position is known, or ought to be known, to everybody. They stand up for a real entity, and are thus unable to shift their ground as often as they find it convenient, and to represent our monetary system as one thing to-day and as something quite different to-morrow. The bimetallist has a freer hand. There is no body of doctrine which he is under compulsion to hold and to profess. On the principles of his system, and on the effects likely to follow from it, he can say anything he pleases. This it is which has enabled so large a number of persons to unite and to call themselves bimetallists. Mischievous they may all be, but they are not all mischievous in the same way. The papers put out by the Gold Standard Defence Association are intended to deal with them by turns; to refute the theory of bimetallism in any one of the many forms which it has assumed; to expound clearly what a sound currency ought to be, and to illustrate it by explaining what our own currency, in point of fact, is.

The first paper of the series gives a general statement

of the objects of the association, and of the currency systems which it supports and which it attacks. It points out that the obligation to pay 100 gold sovereigns is simple and clearly to be understood. The bimetallist would put instead of it an obligation to pay either 100 gold sovereigns or as much silver as is equivalent in weight to some fixed multiple of 100 gold sovereigns, 'whichever I find the cheaper.' But what this fixed multiple is to be our English bimetallists refuse to answer, and the paper complains with reason of their silence on a question of such vital importance as this. Since this paper was written Lord Farrer has wrung out an answer from them. His letters in *The Times*, headed, 'Wanted a Ratio,' and the bimetallists' replies to them, have made it fairly clear that the undeclared ratio must be 1 to 15½. Not, indeed, that this is binding on the whole body. Some of them have disclaimed it, and a good many more have maintained an attitude of reserve and have avowedly refused to commit themselves to any ratio. But this, at least, we have learned—that the 1 to 15½ ratio is most generally accepted, and is the one which bimetallists are aiming at, whether they think it prudent to say so or not.

The second paper, written by Lord Farrer just before the general election, and the third paper, addressed expressly to the electors of the United Kingdom, go more fully into the various matters at issue. Of the important points which they make, we may single out, as deserving special notice, the proofs they offer that whatever depression there is in the commerce and industries of the country can be accounted for wholly apart from currency, that bimetallism would be no cure for it, and that, whatever may be the interest of other countries, it would not be the interest of England, and least of all the interest of the working classes, to agree to an alteration in our present standard of value. On the alleged appreciation of gold

a little more might have been said. It is a stronghold of the bimetallists, and as such demands special attack. Lord Farrer shows, indeed, that present low prices are not due to currency causes, and that the asserted scarcity of gold has no existence in fact. If he had shown also that while prices have fallen in some departments they have no less markedly risen in others, it would have much strengthened his case.

The next three papers continue in controversial style. They test bimetallic statements and theories by reference mainly to historical facts. The often-repeated assertions that as long as a bimetallic system was maintained through the action of France the standard of value was comparatively stable, and that the fall in silver has been due to the abandonment of that system, are shown to be untrue. There can be no room for doubt that it was not the demonetization of silver which caused the fall in price, but that it was the fall in price which caused the demonetization of silver. The report of the French Imperial Commission appointed in 1869 is conclusive as to this. Silver, the Commission says, appears to be falling into disfavour, and we must hasten to demonetize it if we do not wish to be left the last to be encumbered with the inconvenient metal. On the loss which England, as a creditor country, would suffer by having its debts paid in silver at the ratio of 15½ to 1, the bimetallist remark is, that international debts are discharged not by coin, but by commodities, and that consequently there would be no loss. The reply of the Gold Standard Defence Association is less complete than it might easily have been made. The precise mode in which international debts are settled is, no doubt, as they say, a very intricate matter; but it is open to observe that, since bimetallism is intended to raise general prices, England would quite obviously, on the bimetallists' own showing, receive a smaller amount of the more highly-

priced goods in payment of the debts due to her. On another point, too, the bimetallic champion might be hoist with his own petard. One of his stock complaints is that a debasement of the currency is not followed by an immediate rise in wages, so that the manufacturers and producers and employers of labour, in those happy countries in which the debasement is most advanced, enjoy an unfair advantage as competitors over such a country as our own where honest money is still used. But if wages do not rise in the degree in which the currency is debased, it seems to follow that the proposed debasement, however advantageous to our employers of labour, would not be much to the interest of the labourers and artisans, and that in all fairness these classes ought to be told this. But we do not observe that the bimetallists have been very forward in telling them. The whole subject comes under the *disciplina arcani*, and they show their prudence by keeping it in the background.

Lord Farrer's paper on the Measure of Value and the Metallic Currency is a most valuable contribution to the series. It states, in a brief and intelligible form, what a currency ought to be, and what our currency actually is. In the course of the paper Lord Farrer drives his pen through a long list of bimetallic heresies, but he is not writing controversially, and he does not, therefore, stop to call attention to the controversial force of his work. His object is to convey information which every one ought to possess who presumes to give an opinion on currency questions, and which a good many of the most prominent bimetallic champions would do wisely to study and to profit from. His next paper, on England's adoption of the gold standard, is well worth notice. It shows conclusively that the gold standard now in use has been chosen by a process of natural selection as the most convenient and best suited to the wants and habits of the

people, and that the Act of 1816 did little else than give legal sanction and recognition to a state of things which existed before the Act was passed.

The next paper of the series, written by Mr. H. D. Macleod, carries the history of currency theory and of currency practice far back into the past. When it goes on to deal with matters at present in debate it proves beyond reasonable doubt the inevitable breakdown of a partial bimetallism, such as France was forced to abandon in 1873, and such as silver men in the United States wish to introduce into their own country now. But when Mr. Macleod argues from the same data that a vast and all-inclusive system of international bimetallism must also break down, since the fancy ratio agreed upon could not be maintained, however many countries had bound themselves to maintain it, he seems to us to be going a little beyond what the teaching of experience warrants. It would have been enough if he had insisted, as an earlier paper of the series has done, that this grand project of a vast international bimetallism is an entirely new thing, and that it is impossible to calculate beforehand what its exact results would be. That it would be difficult to establish, and insecure if established, are two points which could hardly be in serious doubt, so that, whether it were right or wrong in theory, it would be at least imprudent to stake heavily on the chance of its turning out correct, and to give up a good and sound currency system for the sake of an untried substitute, the dangers of which could be foreseen readily enough, but the advantages of which we must be satisfied to take for granted, and to accept implicitly on the assurance of its very confident advocates. At best it would be a leap in the dark, and a leap which we might soon find had landed us on treacherous ground.

Lord Farrer's paper on Bimetallism and Legal Tender forms the tenth and last of the series. It explains the

enormous change which the bimetallic scheme involves. Our present law of legal tender is at once simple and intelligible. A promise to pay 100 gold sovereigns does not need to be supplemented and enforced by any special law. It is a contract, and as such must be discharged in accordance with its terms. If it can be discharged by the payment of a bank-note, this is only because the note can be exchanged at the bank counter for its face value in sovereigns. In effect, therefore, there is no need for a law of legal tender, except for very small debts, payable in token silver or copper coins. Lord Farrer shows that a law of legal tender which goes beyond this is a just object of suspicion. Such a law has been used in the past to compel creditors to accept less than their due, in the form either of debased money or of inconvertible paper. The bimetallists propose to have resort to it for a like purpose, and in place of the free operation of voluntary contract, and of a law which enforces the performances of such contracts, to substitute an artificial construction of contracts, such as would never occur to the parties unless forced upon them by an arbitrary enactment. The law would probably be evaded by special private arrangements, making all promises to pay redeemable only in gold. If applied, therefore, only to future dealings, it would be confusing and inconvenient, and would serve no good end. If applied to existing contracts it would be grossly unjust.

That the late memorial to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in favour of the maintenance of our gold standard was supported by so long a list of names which carry weight in the mercantile and commercial world has not been without its influence on public opinion. The formation of the Gold Standard Defence Association, and the very useful series of papers which it has put out, will serve further to enlighten the public mind. For a long time

the bimetallists have been allowed to have things a little too much their own way. The ordinary man is aware in his own heart that currency questions are a little beyond him. He loves, of course, to have his own opinions and to speak as an authority upon them. The modicum of absolutely necessary knowledge he must pick up as he can ; so that, since he finds bimetallism a good deal talked about as a panacea for all ills, and since, for all he can judge, its advocates may be perfectly in the right, it is natural that he should join in the cry, and should show his wisdom by promptly shouting with the loudest. The series of papers published by the Gold Standard Defence Association do something more than show that there is another side to the question. They serve more than a temporary need. They are a real contribution to the permanent literature of the subject with which they deal, and they state and illustrate and confirm a large body of important truths which are now for the first time brought within the reach of the general reader. 'Tracts for the Times,' they might fairly claim as their title, for such they are and something more.



## XVI.

### NATURAL TAXATION.

MR. T. G. SHEARMAN'S treatise on natural taxation is incompletely described as an inquiry into the practicability, justice, and effects of raising all the taxes of a country by a system which he terms 'natural.' Before he enters on this part of his inquiry he has first to show that all other systems which have been tried have either failed or have done mischief. Indirect, or, as Mr. Shearman terms it, 'crooked' taxation comes first in the black list, and is set aside not only as having been devised for the express purpose of preventing voters from feeling the burden of taxation and becoming restive under it, but, further, as having, in the United States, lent itself to a vast amount of rascality in Congress and in State officials. He gives, among other proofs of his assertion, the alleged fact that the frequent and sudden increases in the tax on whisky between 1862 and 1866 were notoriously accompanied by large speculations in whisky, carried for the account of Congressmen by the whisky ring, and amounting to direct and gross bribery. If the tax is 'protective,' it has the further fault of increasing the cost of the taxed articles by fully three times the amount of the duties received by the State—an estimate illustrated and confirmed by a quotation from Mr. David A. Wells on economic changes, to the effect that for ten years ending in 1887 the people of the

<sup>1</sup> *Natural Taxation, an inquiry into the Practicability, Justice, and Effects of a Scientific and Natural Method of Taxation*, by Thomas G. Shearman. G. P. Putnam & Sons, New York and London. 1895.

United States paid yearly an excess of \$56,000,000 for steel and iron, while the yearly revenue to the United States from the duties on steel and iron was less than \$15,000,000. It is therefore maintained that, like other taxes of the kind, it has added enormously to the general burden of the people, and this for the benefit not so much of the Government as of a few large producers with an interest in the steel and iron business. For these and for other reasons, 'crooked' taxation is discarded as unfit to stand in the place of the 'natural' system to which Mr. Shearman is leading up.

Next comes direct taxation, and this, if imposed in the form of an income-tax, is pretty sure to be evaded by false returns. Mr. Shearman believes that in England and in several European States fully one-third of the tax is thus evaded, while in the United States the proportion evaded was never less than one-half, and rose as high as two-thirds at the close of the ten years during which an income-tax was in force. A tax on successions is less open to this objection, for, as Mr. Shearman somewhat cynically remarks, the administrators of dead men's estates might not object to commit perjury for their own profit, but would have strong conscientious scruples in doing so for the benefit of some one else. But as the principal or as the sole source of public revenue—for it is of this that Mr. Shearman is in search—a succession tax would have to be so raised that it would be very mischievous in its effects, or would be so evaded or escaped that it would fail in productive power. A direct taxation of personal property is next shown to be impracticable. It has been tried in every State of the Union, and with very curious results. In New York, we are told, not 15 per cent. of the property liable to the tax was ever entered on the assessor's rolls, and a large percentage of what was so entered was found to belong to such helpless persons as

women, minors, and lunatics, or to trustees and guardians. Much like this has been the experience of California and of Illinois. In Illinois, however, if the valuation of any county is considered too low, the method adopted is to increase everybody's taxes fourfold, on the assumption that all alike have been making false returns. The taxation of improvements comes next under review, and it is found no better than the others, partly because it discourages improvements, partly because it does not admit of being justly and equally imposed, and partly, too, because in many cases it is so unequally imposed as to leave no room for doubt that the State assessors have been bribed. Mr. Shearman thus far may be taken to have made out that no one of the several forms of taxes levied in the United States is fit to be the sole source by which the entire revenue is to be raised, and that every one of them is open to objection for one reason or for another.

He proceeds next to the 'natural' tax, which can stand alone, and against which there is nothing to be said. His scheme is simplicity itself. It consists in diverting to the Government the needful portion of the rent now paid to private landowners, and in imposing a proportional charge on owners who occupy their own ground, and on those who hold such special privileges over land as, e.g., railway companies and telegraph companies do. This tax does, in a certain sense, deserve what Mr. Shearman claims for it. Landlords, he says, are already in the nature of tax-gatherers. They can accurately assess the value of the privilege of occupying their land. But though nature does not compel them to pay over to the State the so-called taxes which they collect, the defect is one which it is well within the power of the State itself to remedy. We need not go at length through the long list of benefits which, it is claimed, would follow from the imposition of this tax on land and on the rents of land, and from the

repeal of all other taxes. Its yield would be large enough for all national and local wants; the proposed reform would stimulate production, increase wages, promote the development of industry, and in a dozen other ways would serve the interests of more than nine-tenths of the people.

But how about the other tenth who are to pay the tax? Is it just that their property should be taken from them and diverted to public purposes? In Mr. Shearman's opinion it would be perfectly just. The power of land-owners to collect rent is, he argues, a delegated power of taxation—a right 'to tax other individuals for the privilege of standing upon the earth.' The French Revolution, Mr. Shearman urges, made short work with such privileges as this; what reason in the world is there why the United States should be any more tender to them now? It is true, of course, that value has been given for the right; that it has been held or dealt with for generations under direct guarantee from the Legislature, and that to single it out now for the treatment which Mr. Shearman proposes would be nothing better than an act of downright robbery. Mr. Shearman makes light of such objections as these. Changes in the tariff, with their attendant frauds, are sure to do wrong to somebody; so why, he urges, should land-owners escape the operation of the universal law? The State, moreover, we are told, has annexed to the ownership of land a clearly implied condition that the guarantee is to provide for all the expenses of government; but this we must accept on Mr. Shearman's authority, since there is no written evidence of the contract. The most, therefore, that we can allow in favour of Mr. Shearman's 'natural' tax is that it seems simpler and more practicable than any other scheme for the confiscation of private property, and that it would not be more dishonest. A scheme is sufficiently condemned when this is the best that can be said for it.

## XVII.

### DR. SAMUEL PARR.

WHAT likeness do the name and title of Dr. Samuel Parr call up? Not a very distinct one; perhaps no likeness at all. The name is just remembered; the man who bore it has been forgotten. This is not the fate which Parr himself expected or which his own generation expected for him. Parr, in his own day, took rank as an intellectual master. His reputation as a man of learning and of vast mental capacity was great and widely spread. There was a large inner circle within which it especially passed current; but it went far beyond this, with scarcely a question raised anywhere as to its worth and genuineness. He had not written much, but he was always proposing to write, and getting full credit in advance for what he was assumed to be capable of doing, and to be just on the point of doing, and to be hindered from doing only by some accident or other which would not always interfere with the full manifestation of his vast and titanic powers. Such was Parr in his own day; respected, followed, courted, flattered and feared. In the present day he is a forgotten name, or survives only as a faint and far-off shadow of departed greatness. The world has ceased to care about him, and has consigned him to oblivion, scarcely troubling itself to pronounce an unfavourable judgement upon him. It may be worth while to ask how far this is the fate which Parr has deserved,

and how far his credentials would pass muster, if any one were at the pains of looking into them.

The unkind treatment which Parr has received has been, in some degree, the fault of his biographers. He has not been fortunate in them. The best account of him is in Barker's *Parriana*, a miscellaneous collection of lives and anecdotes written on no plan, but giving on the whole a very fair estimate of what the man was and what he did. It is made up of various lives of Parr which appeared in the periodical publications of the day, while his fame as a scholar was still fresh ; and added to these, and forming the most interesting part of the book, are a number of letters from old friends and pupils, giving their personal reminiscences of Parr and supplying the reader with materials for forming a fair positive judgement about him. This book is less well known than it deserves to be. It is a good repertory of facts and good reading—a praise which it would be impossible to bestow upon the systematic, pretentious lives of Parr by his two accepted biographers, Johnstone and Field. These are painstaking and accurate, but they are portentously dull. Lastly, and belonging to quite a different order of literature, comes the well-written, amusing, and malicious account of Parr from the venomous pen of De Quincey. De Quincey's professed purpose is to correct the unduly high estimate which the world had formed about Parr. For this he spared no effort. He attacks Parr on his strong as well as on his weak points. The picture he gives is of a pedant and prattling fool, who had taken by storm, through sheer impudence, a rank in the literary world to which he was wholly unentitled.

Parr's was not a very eventful life. He was born at Harrow, in 1747, of middle-class parentage. He started under grave disadvantages, without money, without position, without powerful friends. From his father,

a surgeon and apothecary of the place, he inherited chiefly a sound bodily frame, a vigorous mind, and strong Tory principles—these last a family heirloom which he did not long retain. At nine years of age he was sent to the town school, first under Dr. Thackeray and then under Dr. Sumner, and he gave as a schoolboy early promise of distinction. He had formidable class competitors, Bennet, afterwards Bishop of Cloyne, and Jones, afterwards Sir William Jones, and he did more than hold his own with them. The time the three boys spent together at Harrow was not long, but it served to lay the foundations of a close and lifelong friendship. It was by Parr's departure that the trio was broken up. Before he was fourteen he had risen to be head boy, and he left school very shortly afterwards. From that time to his eighteenth year he seems to have been at a loose end. His father's wish was that he should follow his own profession, but the boy's tastes were already pronounced for the Church and for the career of a scholar, and while he was working in his father's surgery he continued still to give all his spare hours and all the devotion of his mind to his old classical reading. One of the vexations of his new life was the atrocious medical Latin which he was obliged to interpret and to follow, but his complaints on this score struck no corresponding chord in his father's professional breast. 'Damn the Latin, Sam ; make up the pills,' is the only recorded reply the old gentleman deigned to make.

But Parr's fate, after all, was to be Latin and not prescriptions. In vain was an arrangement made for him to carry on his medical studies in London. He had no inclination for them anywhere, and he could put no heart into the work. His classical bent was irresistible. The decisive step was taken in 1765, when he gave up all thought or pretence of medicine, and entered as a pensioner at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. But here, again, new

embarrassments were awaiting him. The year after he matriculated, his father died, his means came to an end, his friends failed him, and, in spite of the most rigid economy, he was forced to leave Cambridge without having taken his degree. But he had stayed long enough to gain some repute as a scholar, and it stood him in good stead now. In 1767, in the twenty-first year of his age, he was invited back to Harrow by Dr. Sumner, as first assistant-master. To a man of Parr's age and standing, this was an enormous compliment. The post, too, was in many ways congenial to him. It brought him once more into connexion with a headmaster for whom he had a thorough love and esteem; it kept him occupied on the subjects which were most to his taste; and it left him leisure enough to follow up his own studies out of school hours. He was in the right groove at last.

But it was never Parr's destiny to stay long in the right groove, or indeed in any groove. The story of his departure from Harrow has been variously told in some of its details, but the main facts are in no doubt. In 1771 Sumner died, and Parr, as next in the succession, put in his claim for the headmastership. He was not successful. The choice of the trustees fell, to his great indignation, not on himself, but on Benjamin Heath, an assistant-master at Eton. Parr's youth—he was not yet twenty-five—would have accounted for his failure. But Parr did not so consider it. In his own eyes he was the victim of a special and exaggerated injustice. That a foreigner had been fetched in and put up over his head was a slight which he could understand only as having been inflicted upon him of malice prepense. He cast about for reasons, and found every conceivable reason except the right one. He was too independent for the trustees. He could not be relied upon to do what they told him, and to sacrifice the school discipline at their bidding. His political



principles were against him. In 1768 he had given his vote for John Wilkes as member for Middlesex, and the trustees, he felt sure, had remembered the circumstance, and were punishing him for what he had done then. That a man of five and twenty was too young for the headmastership might be true in the abstract, but Parr claimed to be judged, not by his years but by his appearance. He looked fifty at the very least, he dressed for fifty, he had more than once passed for fifty. His ample wig had already begun to be historical. It had done him ill service at the Brentford polling-booth, where he had been mobbed as no true Wilkesite, whatever colours he might hang out. It was only fair that it should do him good service now, with a different class of electors. The end of the matter was that Parr was so extremely angry at what he chose to consider the gross wrong done to him, that he threw up his mastership and established a sort of rival school at Stanmore, taking about forty of the Harrow boys with him.

This was a memorable year in Parr's life. The secession to Stanmore was the turning-point of his whole career. To have remained at Harrow would have kept him in the regular course of preferment. In due time the headmastership would have been open to him, valuable in itself, still more valuable as an almost certain stepping-stone to some high place in the Church. The move to Stanmore took him away from all this, and gave him nothing in exchange. His idea, no doubt, had been that he would play the part of Abelard at Melun, that he would establish at Stanmore a successful rival school to Harrow, that he would throw down a challenge to Heath, and would beat him on his own ground, and would thus convince the trustees and the world that the late election to the headmastership had been not only a wrong, but a mistake. It was in the year, too, that

Parr married his first wife. He was doomed to be disappointed in both his ventures. The lady proved to be a good housekeeper, but a shrew. The school made no way; the neighbourhood of Harrow was fatal to it. Parr's reputation as a teacher had been great at Harrow and it became greater at Stanmore, but it was of no avail against the organized opposition which he had been vain and foolish enough to provoke. The best days of the Stanmore School were at its start. The burst of enthusiasm which had given Parr his original forty pupils proved not to be lasting. There soon came a decline in numbers—vacancies as they occurred were not filled up. The profits were at no time great, and they fell off steadily until even the maintenance charges of the place were not cleared. Parr had been obliged to borrow money to defray his first expenses, and he found to his dismay that he had no chance of getting back what he had spent. For five years he persevered; then he gave up Stanmore, and took the appointment of headmaster to the town grammar school at Colchester. But he found himself no better off at Colchester than he had been at Stanmore. After two years' trial he migrated once again, this time to Norwich, early in 1779, and there he stayed about eight years as master of the Grammar School, with a constantly growing reputation, and with a success fully equal to his hopes. In the course of 1786 he gave up his appointment and took the living of Hatton in Warwickshire on the presentation of Lady Trafford, the mother of one of his Norwich boys. Parr's move to Hatton was his last change of place. He lived at Hatton until his death, some forty years afterwards, occupying himself with his duties as parish priest, and for some time taking private pupils to eke out his somewhat slender income.

When Parr left Norwich he was no longer an unknown

man; he had an established name as one of the great scholars and divines of his day. In 1788 he was appointed by Bishop Lowth to be a Prebendary of St. Paul's, a post which became very valuable in the end, almost too late for Parr to enjoy the benefit of it, but which for a good many years yielded scarcely more than a nominal income. But Parr's thoughts were now set on higher preferment. It had always been the wish of his heart to be made a bishop; and the king's illness, and the prospect of a regency with his friend Fox as Minister, seemed to promise well for the fulfilment of his ambitious hopes. But the fates were not favourable to him; the king recovered; Fox did not come into power, and Parr was left, unmitred, as incumbent of Hatton. In 1790 he made a nominal exchange of Hatton for the living of Waddenhoe, but he continued to reside at Hatton, and to carry on the work of the place.

Up to this time Parr had not had an easy life. His income had never been large; his habits were profuse; and even with the receipts from his private pupils, he had scarcely managed to make both ends meet. The day of relief was not far off. In 1795 he was offered, and accepted, a present of £300 a year, the yield of a sum subscribed for his benefit among his personal and political friends. In 1802 he was presented with the living of Graffham, and this he held together with his other Church preferments. He now, at length, felt himself in easy circumstances, and was able, to his infinite delight, to give up his private pupils, and to be master of his own time.

In 1806 his hopes of a bishopric again rose high—Lord Grenville was first Secretary of State; and if Fox had lived a little longer to hold office under him, the appointment would probably have been made. Parr declares that he had Fox's promise, and that everything was in

train for his promotion. Fox's death in the course of the year was fatal, this second time, to Parr's chance, and from that time onward he had no choice but to wrap himself in his virtue, and to console himself with the thought that he had used no unworthy arts to obtain the rank which he coveted. In 1825 Parr died, and though his reputation had somewhat declined during the later years of his life, his death was felt and acknowledged as a real national loss.

It is not easy to show in detail the successive steps by which Parr rose to eminence. When he began life as Sumner's assistant, he was well known and highly thought of within the narrow circle of his friends. During the last five and forty years of his life he was known to everybody. From being a very clever young man, one among the thousand or so very clever young men of his day, he had passed somehow to be one among the first half-dozen classical scholars in the country. As an author he had some claim to notice, but certainly not to the amount of notice he received. Great things were expected from him, and he wrote just enough to keep expectation alive, and to furnish what his friends could accept as proof that he was capable of more. He has written nothing which has survived; not much which, in any sense, deserves to have survived. His first published work—two sermons for the benefit of the Norwich Charity Schools—were given to the world in 1780. These were followed in 1781 by a *Discourse on the Late Fast*—published at first without Parr's name, but soon recognized as his. In 1786 came a *Discourse on Education*, a sequel to the sermons of 1780. Next, and most celebrated of all, was the Bellenden preface, written while Parr was at Norwich, and published just after he had become established at Hatton. Then, in 1792, came the famous *Tracts by Warburton and a Warburtonian*. The letter from

Irenopolis in 1792 and the Spital sermon in 1800 pretty well complete the list. His other published sermons, his character of the late C. J. Fox (1809), and his letter to Dr. Milner did little or nothing to add to his reputation as an author.

The Bellenden preface is certainly a remarkable work. It is in Latin, and Parr was an admitted master of Latin prose writing. He could put more hard words and phrases into a page than Cicero would have put into a volume. The preface is a strange compound. It professes to be an introduction to a reprint of Bellenden's treatises *de Statu*; this is what it was bargained for and paid for as being, and what it ought therefore to have been. It soon branches off from this to a laudation of the three chief members of the Coalition Ministry, and to a disguised attack on Pitt and his friends. It was Parr's bid for a bishopric, delayed unfortunately in the publication until some time after the Coalition had broken up and gone out in disgrace. But Parr, even so, was confident about the effect of his quasi-Ciceronian thundering. 'I will stake my chance of a bishopric,' he said, 'upon five pages of my Preface.' The preface was read and admired, as it deserves to be admired. It had a large share in obtaining for Parr the annuity which his friends raised for him. A bishopric it did not obtain for him. The public characters whom it praised or abused it left in public estimation very much as it found them. A good Latin squib was hardly the powerful political weapon which Parr in his fortieth year was still fond enough to fancy it.

Of all Parr's English writings the most spirited work is the *Tracts by Warburton and a Warburtonian*. It seems likely that out of the Bellenden preface and the disappointed hopes connected with it, the Warburtonian Tracts came to be published. Parr's professed purpose in pub-

lishing them was twofold. It was to rescue from oblivion some early writings of Warburton, which Bishop Hurd had omitted in his edition of Warburton's works, and which Warburton himself had done his utmost to suppress. It was also to defend Leland and Jortin from an attack which Hurd, as champion and hanger-on to Warburton, had made upon them. The attack had been anonymous, but Hurd was known to have been the author. Hurd was a court favourite ; he was not on good terms with Parr ; and Parr more than suspected that it was through Hurd's influence at court that he had been passed over. He determined, therefore, that Hurd should be made to suffer. His method of revenge was to rake up and republish some of Hurd's unowned pamphlets some twenty years after they had been written and read and forgotten, accompanying them with a preface very bitter, very malignant, and at the same time more vigorous by far than anything else he has written. For this, in his own words, he summoned up the whole force of his mind. The occasion was an unworthy one, but the business, good or bad, was admirably well done. It would seem, indeed, that some spitefulness and some sense of wrong done to himself were the only motive forces that could get really good work from Parr. Most of his English writings, if they were ever taken up now, would soon be flung aside as intolerable. Long words, long-involved sentences, stilted periods, and laboured antitheses—these make up Parr's ordinary style. The workmanship for the most part is bad, clumsy, unpleasing, and the material is not much better. But in the *Tracts by Warburton and a Warburtonian* he goes straight at his work. He forgets for a moment the wish to make a display of his learning, and he aims, with a single mind, at causing his enemy the greatest annoyance he can inflict. Against the enemies of religion and good morals he thunders loudly and harm-

lessly. It is for the enemies of Dr. Parr that his most telling bolts are reserved; and when he suspects an affront or an injury to himself, he uses them with formidable effect. The prefaces to the Warburtonian tracts are written at white heat. Parr's anger against Hurd carries him through page after page of really powerful invective; it sets his faculties at work, and keeps them at work to construct and bring out in its full proportions a complicated picture of baseness. When Parr attempts the character of Charles James Fox he makes flourishes with a blunt pencil, and with a profusion of laudatory verbiage describes nothing. Hurd his enemy is drawn with consummate art. Every stroke tells and does the work it was intended to do, until at last we have a completed sketch of the most unscrupulous and the most contemptible of flatterers and adventurers and untrustworthy of false friends.

Parr's literary projects were many and various, but most of them never came to be more than projects. From time to time he had something or other on the stocks, some *magnum opus* into which his stores of learning were to be thrown, and by which his name was to be preserved for ever. An edition of Sophocles was one of the first of these. Parr began it in a sort of way, collected what was to serve as material for it, jotted down notes which were to be incorporated into it, and finally gave it up, or, rather, ceased to loiter over it. With a projected life of Johnson he scarcely made as much progress as this. He gloried in the idea of it; he spoke of it to his friends as a vehicle for displaying his own learning; he got so far with it as to put aside some thirty miscellaneous volumes from his library which were, in some unexplained way, to be worked into it, and he did nothing more, except to regret that he had not written it. 'He will ever have to lament that amidst his cares, his sorrows, and his wants he did not write the life of his learned and revered friend.' Such

is the undated funeral inscription, if we may so term it, which he left behind him in his library; and though he survived Johnson for more than forty years, he never got beyond the point of continuing to lament that Johnson's life was still not written. His *Memoirs of Sumner* are a pendant to his life of Johnson. Sumner died in 1771. In 1815 we find Parr still busy talking about his memoirs, declaring that he had not lost sight of them, and that with seven or eight days' work they could be completed out of hand. A life of Charles James Fox was another of his abortive plans. This, in a sort of way, he did execute. He put together a number of lives and notices written by other hands, and he published them in a collected form, adding to the volume some rhapsodical remarks of his own, of no great value in the opinion of his most favourable critics.

Parr's style is a remarkable one. No fool could have used it. It bears witness to very considerable power. His great art is not to darken counsel but to create an appearance of darkening it, to seem to be saying something so profound and so wise that no ordinary terms can be found to express it, whereas all the while he has had so little to say that the real puzzle is how he can have taken so long in saying it. It is a triumph of unredeemed pedantry; or, if redeemed at all, redeemed only by occasional flashes of spite. Language in Parr's hands is a vehicle for nothing. It has no charm in itself, and it conveys neither instruction nor amusement. It froths well, and this is about all it does. His pompous utterances of commonplace thoughts deserve all the credit which can be thought due to a performance of the kind. In the Hatton pulpit they must have been very effective indeed. Not one of Parr's audience could have had much idea of what he was talking about, but it was something very deep; it was well larded with scraps of Greek and Latin, and even of Hebrew, to heighten the effect, and it was



delivered with plenty of assurance on the part of the preacher. His sermons, like all his writings, are curiosities in their way. They are good instances of what—if we may coin a word after Wordsworth—we might term ‘oratorical diction.’ They are the sort of stuff which the mind may admit as oratory, but from which it can derive no profit. The hearer or reader is puffed out, but he is not edified. The author’s turgid self-complacency is the main thing to which expression has been given, and it can affect the reader with nothing but a likeness of itself.

Parr’s Spital sermon has been chosen by his admirers as his great pulpit triumph. The selection has been fair enough. The Spital sermon is Parr all through. In one sense indeed it is not Parr. The thoughts in it, such as they are, are not Parr’s own, but the language and the arrangement make the whole thing quite original enough. We will endeavour as briefly as possible to do what justice we can to them. The Spital sermon was preached by Parr before the Lord Mayor and the Governors of the Royal Hospitals of London. The text is from the Epistle to the Galatians—‘As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith.’ From this text Parr takes occasion to describe the kind of goodwill which a man ought to feel to his neighbour, and the various uses which it will serve within its several limits. Universal benevolence is pronounced to be of too wide an extent to be of much practical service. Goodwill, therefore, may be felt with more advantage as its sphere narrows. Countrymen, kinsmen, friends, and benefactors suggest themselves as its more proper objects. Nor must the tie of religion be forgotten. To be of the same household of faith, ‘to have met again and again in the same sanctuary, to have shared in the performance of the most

solemn and most pleasing duties,' &c., &c.—all this is pronounced with truth to be among the most close and tender bonds by which men can be united. So far, then, Parr's position is clear enough. He asserts nothing that will not be very readily granted him, though some surprise may be felt that it should have been thought necessary to insist upon it at so great length, and to stretch a handful of second-hand truisms over some score or more large octavo pages. But Parr, it is soon found, has another surprise in store. In due time he makes the discovery that all he has been insisting on has been absolutely nothing to his purpose. His apostolical rule of life is not the rule followed in the London Hospitals. So round Parr comes, but with no sense that he has been on the wrong tack, that he is altering his course completely, and that in all that he has been saying as yet he has been simply talking at large. 'The doors of your hospitals, I imagine, are not thrown open or shut according to any narrow rules of religious distinction.' So much for the rule of doing good, 'specially to those who are of the household of faith.' But the rule, it appears, must be stated even more broadly than this, if it is to correspond with the facts. Parr has next to acknowledge that the London Hospitals are open not only 'to those who dissent from our religious establishment, as well as those who belong to it, 'but further, 'to the natives of Africa, Asia, and America as well as of Europe'—'to any unhappy sufferers from any shore.' So much for the rule that friends, kinsmen, and fellow-countrymen are the proper objects for benevolent help. The text of the Spital sermon is made up with a defence of charitable foundations in reply to an attack made upon them by a late foreigner—'Mr. Turgot, Minister to Louis XIV.' Such is the substance of the Spital sermon, with its declamatory sentences and its very

slender thread of thought. As for what is termed the metaphysical part of the sermon, a reference to Butler's sermon on the love of our neighbour would have been sufficient for every purpose except to display Parr's learning. Then follow the notes, 210 pages long, added partly in support of the sermon, but chiefly as giving Parr's views about things in general. They consist of a series of quotations from some fifty or more ancient and modern writers, some of whom Parr quotes with approval, others whom he does his best to controvert. Turgot's attack on charitable institutions leads him into an elaborate defence of the English universities as coming within Turgot's strictures. He gives a list three pages long of the eminent men whom they had produced, and he takes thirty pages for giving his reasons for 'studiously avoiding the insertion of Mr. Gibbon's name.' Mr. Field tells us 'that the sermon occupied nearly an hour and a quarter in the delivery; and in allusion to its extreme length, it was remarked by a lady who had been asked her opinion of it, "Enough there is, and more than enough," the first words of the first sentence.' He also quotes from the *New Monthly Magazine*, Nov. 1826, the story that Parr asked the Lord Mayor how he liked the sermon. 'Why, Doctor, there were four things in your sermon that I did not like to hear.' 'State them,' replied Parr, eagerly. 'Why, to speak frankly, they were the quarters of the church clock which struck four times before you had finished it.'

That Parr's religious and political views stood in the way of his advancement in the Church is beyond all question. He took the Whig side just when the Whigs were leaving office, and he takes credit for having stuck to his party. In religious matters he was not free from the suspicion of a leaning to Unitarianism. A Whig Unitarian was not a likely subject for Church promotion

at any time, least of all in the latter half of the eighteenth century. His views on most matters shifted about so easily, that it is greatly to his praise that he did not consciously modify them to serve his own advancement in life. He sometimes agreed with the last book he had read; sometimes he disagreed with it from sheer perversity. It was a matter of choice in what humour he happened to be, and what views happened for the moment to be most prominent in his mind. He sometimes loved to affect a lofty superiority to all views, an esoteric conviction that there was some good in all, and not absolute good anywhere. He sometimes styles himself a latitudinarian, and this in a certain sense he was, though his charity was never wide enough to cover opinions which he had any personal cause to dislike. He voted for toleration to Roman Catholics, but as for certain Protestant Dissenters, Methodists and Calvinists, and such like, he has left on record the view that they were fit subjects for restraint by the civil authority. For Methodism and indeed for every form of Evangelicalism he seems to have had an especial dislike. 'I once,' says one of his friends, 'asked him his opinion of the Methodists; does the good or the evil preponderate?' After a pause for reflection he replied, 'Sir, they are the most hypocritical; they are the most blasphemous; they are the most carrion-like scoundrels upon the face of the earth.' The course of his ideas on the important question of religious tests is typical of the entire man. Up to the year 1782, that is to say for the first five and thirty years of his life, Parr, as he tells us, had disapproved of religious tests. In 1782 he was led to re-examine the subject, and the result was that he changed round completely and thrust himself forward on the sudden as a strong uncompromising champion on the other side. He discovered in the proposed repeal of the Test Act a deep-laid secret scheme for upsetting the

Government. 'They certainly mean rebellion,' said Parr in a private letter to his friend Homer. 'There was never anything so impudent, so insidious, and so base as their intended plot.' Parr's friend and patron, Fox, was with them; but 'I must and will act from my conviction,' writes Parr, 'and I am concerned to see Fox a dupe to their cunning. I think it downright infatuation to support them. Fox will only make enemies in the Church,' &c., &c. Parr's public acts were consistent with his private declarations. He furnished a string of resolutions for the Warwickshire county meeting which were substantially adopted, and which are given with a shake of the head and a smile 'as a literary curiosity' by Parr's admiring biographer, J. Johnstone. The resolutions are to the point, and leave no room whatever for doubt as to the author's meaning. The Test and Corporation Acts are defended not only on principle but down to their most questionable details. This was in 1790. In 1793 Parr again examined the question, and again came to agree with the last authority he looked into. '*The Right of Protestant Dissenters to a Complete Toleration*, by Serjeant Heywood, was the instrument of his conversion this time.' His note in the volume is—'This very able book was published on the application of the Dissenters for the Repeal of the Test Act. It is the only powerful book produced by the opposition, and it wrought a total change in Dr. Parr's mind on the general principle of Tests. He always disapproved of the Sacramental Test, and he now sees the inefficiency and the injustice of all religious Tests whatever.' Here then we have Parr not only changing his opinions, but denying with apparent sincerity that he had ever held at least some part of them.

Parr's failure as an author is a fact for which his partial friends are perpetually finding excuses. It was not for want of knowledge, for this Parr had in abundance. It

was not for want of leisure ; men more busy that he ever was have found time for writing, and during the last five and twenty years of his life he had absolutely nothing else to do. The fact is that when Parr set about writing, he simply sank under the weight of his acquired learning. His stores were immense ; too great by far to be of service to him as a writer. He was weighed down and embarrassed by them. Matters obtruded themselves which had nothing to do with the work in hand, and he had neither strength of mind to dismiss them nor versatility enough to use them with effect. Conversation offered him a more free range and a better opportunity of making the display he loved. Parr was an incessant talker. On all subjects and in all company he was for ever pushing to the front, attacking others and offering himself as a mark for attack. He was not modest himself ; he had not much care for the feelings of other persons, and he trampled upon them without mercy. A wrong date, a wrong reference, a wrong statement about any matter of fact, roused Parr in a moment, and brought him down heavily on the offender. Rude he often was, brutally rude, but it was scarcely within the bounds of possibility that he should be found out in a mistake. So equipped he was afraid of nobody. The weak he could crush and annihilate, and he could hold his own with the strongest. A position of this kind needs something more than impudence to bear it out. If Parr had been less than he claimed to be, he would soon have been discredited and put down. If his standing had been insecure, his offensive assumption of authority could but have insured his more speedy and complete overthrow. But we find him, during a life which was one long challenge, accepted as what he professed himself to be. We find his opinion asked for and deferred to, as often as some disputed point had to be settled. His judgement,

indeed, was far from infallible; he was taken in a dozen times over—most notably by the Ireland forgeries; but even when he was most in the wrong, it was not without the most profuse apologies that his hearers presumed to differ from him.

In this, as in much else, he has not been fortunate in his biographers. Their praise of his conversation is given in general terms, with no specimens that bear it out. Specimens there are, but not good specimens. They show us not a conversational master but a conversational tyrant; pompous, pretentious, and insolent. More unfavourable still is a specimen which De Quincey gives and which he vouches for as genuine, a specimen of mere chatter, of slander and retail gossip, 'fit rather for washerwomen over their tubs than for scholars and statesmen.' That Parr's vanity and self-importance and strong love of display served at times to make him cut a ridiculous figure, especially in his later years, must be admitted on evidence more trustworthy than De Quincey's. In 1823 Sir Walter Scott, e. g., reports having seen him in the streets of Edinburgh, 'marching like a turtle erect on its hinder claws, in full canonicals, and surrounded by a sort of halo of satellites, male and female, to whom he was laying down the law as if the whole town was his own' (*Letters*, vol. ii. p. 174). But Parr must have been something better than he appears from any of the above accounts from friends or enemies or neutrals. As far as they give us Parr at all, it is not Parr at his best; it is certainly not the Parr whom Johnson met at Langton's house, and had a long talk with, and was delighted with. 'Sir,' said Johnson to Langton, 'I am obliged to you for having asked me this evening. Parr is a fair man. I do not know when I have had an occasion of such free controversy. It is remarkable how much of a man's life may pass without meeting with any instance

of this kind of open discussion.' This, from Johnson, settles the matter in Parr's favour.

We have yet to speak of Parr as a schoolmaster, and he ranks by universal consent as a very great schoolmaster. His curious compound nature, with its greatness and its littleness, its kindness and its severity, its love of rule and its dislike of system, found in a schoolroom its most free scope and elbow-room. Parr, it must be acknowledged, was not altogether an ideal schoolmaster. He was passionate, capricious, given to favouritism, and careless about any but his best and most likely pupils. Discipline out of school hours, there was little or none kept, and in school hours it was incredibly lax. Not that Parr was by any means an easy-going schoolmaster. Extreme severity was the very essence of his school system. His one settled rule was that his best pupils were to be flogged most frequently and most severely. Whom Parr loved he chastened; and though he loved all his boys, it was on the clever boys that the chief marks of his affection were bestowed. Dunces, we are told, might remain dunces for all that Parr cared. When he took a class of boys, he set on only the three or four at the top. The rest were mere dummies. Their normal duty was to listen to those above them, and to be spectators of their frequent punishments. It was only when the top boys had failed, and the question, whatever it was, had passed on still unanswered, that the lower boys began to feel themselves unsafe. Even when the whole class was flogged, as it sometimes was, the lower boys suffered least. Parr began at the top and relaxed his severity towards the end, whether it was that his arm wearied, or simply because he did not care to waste his powers upon the poor unproductive material which he had left to the last. When boys had any mental faculties worth cultivating, he did his utmost to bring



them out. One boy, we are told, had passed for some time as a lad of no talent, until the fatal day came when the discovery was made by an under-master and reported to Parr, that the lad was a lad of genius and that very great things might be made of him. 'Very well,' said Parr, with a delighted chuckle, 'then we'll begin and flog to-morrow.'

The rod from long use seems to have grown to his hand, and to have become a sort of natural weapon to him. He evidently found it hard that the restraints of society did not suffer him to carry it always about with him, and to employ it on the right objects wherever he fell in with them. A young spark once ventured to oppose Parr in company, and was for going into some argument with him. 'Is that your opinion,' said Parr, 'and do you wish to argue the point with me? I do not use reasoning with such boys as you, but if I had a rod here, sir, I would give you a good flogging.'

About Parr's scheme of teaching, opinions will probably differ. The world has not yet pronounced finally what scheme is good and what bad. Parr himself had no doubt on the matter. For desultory half study, spread over a wide range of subjects, he had a profound contempt. He taught Greek and Latin, and he exacted from his pupils a thorough and intelligent knowledge of them. Parr's class, or that part of it which he thought worth attending to, had to construe with precision and neatness. Every form and construction must have, further, their proper rule given on demand, and in the very words of the grammar. As a mental exercise, nothing could be better than this. Expression and readiness and precision of memory were the special qualities which it developed and brought into play, and it was at the pupil's peril to be found wanting in any of them. His system was justified by its results. Parr, as a schoolmaster,

had grave disadvantages to contend against. He was never appointed as head of a first-rate or even of a second-rate school. In each case his school was what he himself made it. It was to him and not to the school that the raw material was sent. Parr did succeed in making some capital scholars from it, and it is to him, in all fairness, that the whole credit must be given. Parr, moreover, with all his severity, and with faults, any one of which might be thought to unfit a man altogether for the office of schoolmaster, gained and kept his pupils' affection and respect. The relation was one of good feeling on both sides. To have been Parr's pupil was to have Parr as a friend for life. His intercourse with his boys was prolonged far beyond school-days, and the link of mutual goodwill and kind offices was seldom severed but by death. His faults, great as they were, seem to have been accepted by his boys as part of the established order of things. They were not condoned, for they were never felt to be faults at all. When Parr left Norwich, one of his pupils acknowledged to a sense of relief, but not of relief only. A great terror was removed, but the glory of the place was gone with it.

A point on which Parr specially plumed himself, a point which his friends were most ready to put forward in his praise, was his thorough independence. His lifelong wish was to be a bishop, and a bishopric he never got, but he was able to console himself with the thought that he had tried no unworthy arts to obtain it, that at least his integrity was his own, and that he had never surrendered it in exchange for the prize which a less manly, less conscientious course would have brought. This is no common praise. It may be worth while to ask in what degree Parr is to be held deserving of it. It is certain Parr was no truckler; it is equally certain, as has been already shown, that his principles sat very loosely upon him. When he

changed them, which he did a dozen times over, it was from conviction or from want of ballast, or from sheer wrong-headedness, but his changes were never so timed as to fall in with the advancement of his personal prospects. His admirers might wish that his conversions were less frequent and, so to say, less summary, and that he had been less often found swinging about from one extreme to the opposite. There was an indecency in all this, a grave want of common sense; but we do not hear even a suspicion hinted that there was anything of downright dishonesty in it. Still, for the praise of perfect independence, something more than this must be made out. 'I make it a rule,' says the Duke of Wellington, 'never to apply to anybody, in any manner, for anything for myself.' Could Parr have said this with truth? His rule, as far as we can judge of it, seems to have been as nearly as possible the reverse. He was perpetually asking, perpetually endeavouring to thrust himself into notice, and snarling and quarrelling over each fresh repulse he met. 'My Lord,' writes old John Wesley to the Bishop of Lincoln, 'I write without ceremony, as neither hoping nor fearing anything from your Lordship or from any man living.' There is the true ring here. Parr's vaunted independence makes a poor show when we test it beside the genuine metal.

To sum up. Parr's career was of his own making. His successes were the fairly earned reward of energy and determination and intermittent hard work. His failures, too, were no less entirely his own. Judged indeed by his own aims and his own standard of success, his entire career must be put down as a failure. A bishopric was the object of his ambition, and he was confident to the last that he ought to have been a bishop, and that future ages would be ever puzzling themselves to discover why he had not been made a bishop. Parr was in many ways

well qualified for the high office he sought, and it was very much his own fault that he never succeeded in obtaining it. He had learning and dignity enough to support the position—almost, indeed, in excess of the position. Nature, when she implanted in his breast the wish to rise, had to all appearance endowed him very amply with the gifts which were most essential for him. A powerful and ready memory, good health and sound digestive organs, and a self-importance and a brazen front which nothing could disconcert or abash—these were Parr's weapons for the battle which lay before him. But along with these Nature had given a last fatal touch which went near to spoil them for use. Parr's vanity might make him ridiculous, but he had quite assurance enough to carry him through in the end and to force the world to take him at his own value. His want of sound judgement was a far more fatal defect, and with want of judgement were combined a perversity and wilfulness of temper which would seldom suffer him to go wrong by halves. Chances he had, but they were thrown away upon him. Place him where you would, he was for ever slipping from the grooves and going off into some eccentric career of his own choosing. But even so he did manage to strike out a line for himself. As a scholar and a man of learning he had few equals in his day. As a schoolmaster he was simply unapproachable.

Parr was somebody while he lived, however near to a nobody he may have become now. He was a man of great promise, but of a promise which never was fulfilled. He has left no abiding mark, nothing by which he can be known or remembered. For such a man as this, there is a proverbial series of steps downward by which he descends into nonentity. He begins his career as a man who will do great things; he becomes next a man who might do great things; but as time moves on and the great

things are not done, he sinks at last to be a man who might have done great things. Parr has gone down all these steps into a lower resting-place than any of them ; he is a man of whom it was once thought that he might have done great things. The present generation has no belief in him, and no positive disbelief. He has no claim upon it, and it is free to forget him if it will. But if it remembers him at all, it must remember him as a man who in his own day took rank among the giants.

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